

THE  
DUTCH NATION

*By the same author*

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS



THE  
DUTCH NATION

an historical study

by

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## FOREWORD •

THIS book was written while I was engaged on war work. I hope that a few of its imperfections will be attributed to the circumstances which attended its production. Although it was written during the Second World War, I believe that the doctrines and opinions it expresses were not influenced by events that were taking place in the world around me. Those who in happier days attended my lectures on Dutch history in the University of London will be familiar with the interpretation presented in this volume. It is, first and foremost, a study in consciousness. It attempts to analyse what the Dutch felt and thought about themselves at the time of the Republic. This is why I have made very considerable use of the rich pamphlet literature of the period. I am the fortunate owner of a fairly representative collection of seventeenth-century Dutch political and religious pamphlets, and I owe more to this anthology of unselfconscious public opinion than could be shown in the course of brief references. These had to remain selective, and attempt no more than to throw light upon controversial or difficult matters. When possible, I have identified pamphlets by their number in Knuttel's catalogue of pamphlets in the Royal Dutch Library at The Hague (c.g. K 3000).

At one point only have I quoted archive material. This is where I deal with the foreign policy of Heinsius. Here again my references are selective, and the interpretation which I offer has the backing of a number of documents which I hope to publish at a more suitable time. The fourth book in this volume is based in part upon work completed and published some years ago.

My narrative is derived from the standard historians of the Low Countries: Fruin in the first place, Van Meteren and Bor, Aitzema and de Wicquefort, Wagenaar, Blok, Pirenne, Japikse and Colenbrander. My indebtedness to the conversation and the works of my friend Pieter Geyl can be repaid neither by acknowledgment nor by reference.

I wish to thank my wife for creating the atmosphere in which, after the fatigue of a day's or a night's work, I found it possible to devote myself to study. I am very grateful to my friend David Hallett whose prudence and good taste tempered the excessive expression of my dogmatic moderation. My thanks are also due to Mrs. Barbara Millem and to Miss Beryl Nicoll, who typed the numerous drafts of this book.

G. J. R.

LONDON, 1944.

# BOOK I

## A STATE, A NATION AND TWO PARTIES

### CHAPTER I

#### ALL THE LOW COUNTRIES

SOME time after Europe had lost the noble unity and the majestic peace that were the gift of the Roman Empire, a population arose in the Low Countries which are now the kingdoms of Holland and of Belgium, industrious and hardy, most of whose feudal masters owed allegiance to the German emperor, and some to the king of France. People had no sense of nationality in those days, but their dream was ever of an escape from the narrow political units that encompassed their existence. They usually supported the masters who, by marriage, conquest, and fraud, enlarged the size of the petty principalities beyond which many adventurous men already carried their feverish activity. Before the end of the Middle Ages the Low Countries or Netherlands contained large duchies like those of Brabant and Gueldres, counties like Flanders, Holland and Zeeland, principalities and bishoprics, seventeen territories all told. Still the process of amalgamation continued.

The Middle Ages came to an end, and modern history began. The human mind must always divide and classify, although life, and therefore history, which is its mirror, are probably indivisible. But of the many categories our thinking has imposed upon reality few are more justified than that which places a major signpost somewhere in the fifteenth century. New vistas opened; horizons receded. Almost entirely united under the sway of the house of Burgundy, the Low Countries seemed ripe for an unreluctant fusion with other territories belonging to this powerful house. The workers and professional soldiers of French-speaking Wallonia, the Dutch-speaking workers of Flanders and Brabant, the Dutch-speaking fishermen and sailors of Holland and Zeeland and Friesland, the peasants and most of all the merchants from all over the Low Countries, rejoiced at the thought that their master's writ ran far and wide. It is difficult to trade where frontiers run capricious and manifold. But the Dukes of Burgundy were not single-minded state builders. They had ambitions in Paris itself. They failed.

Charles the Bold was defeated and killed in 1477. His daughter Mary carried as a dowry to her Hapsburg husband no more than the main portion of the Low Countries.

As the sixteenth century opened in catholic Europe, the modern national state seemed to have found its final pattern. England, France, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Denmark were entities conscious of belonging to their own sovereign. To become fit instruments of human endeavour all they needed was internal consolidation and safety from foreign encroachment. Even at this stage the Netherlands or Low Countries had a chance of ranking in their entirety with these,<sup>1</sup> the first-born and blue-blooded among the heirs of the Roman Empire of the West, and of becoming one of the compact and wholesome communities that are forever free from that sense of inferiority which late-comers and products of nineteenth-century afterthoughts are apt to suffer from. This was not to be, and who shall say whether it was for better or for worse? Cast into its mould during the heroic sixteenth century, the state of the Netherlands might well have known the happiness which good health bestows upon nations as upon individuals. But the gods issued other decrees. In the very nick of time, the northern half managed to secure a place in the ranks of the older nation-states. The Dutch nation was born, coherent, and distinct from other national units. It was born because, during the second half of the sixteenth century, a state came into existence, within whose territory men lived and strove together, and shared experiences so crowded and so intense that they found themselves overnight where it had taken the people of other national states centuries to arrive.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REVOLT OF MEDIEVALISM

**B**Y the interplay of marriage and inheritance it came to pass that the man who about the middle of the sixteenth century was king of Spain and ruler of the Americas was also lord of the Netherlands. Philip of Hapsburg was king of Spain and, altogether independently of this fact, sovereign ruler of Brabant, of

<sup>1</sup> See Fruin, *De Drie Tijdvakken der Nederlandsche Geschiedenis*, esp. pp. 29-31, in *Verspreide Geschriften*, Vol. III.



Gueldres, of Flanders, of Holland, of Zeeland, of Friesland, etc., etc., because his great-grandmother Mary of Burgundy had brought these territories into the house of Hapsburg at the time of her marriage to Maximilian of Hapsburg. To-day the world remembers that Philip's subjects in the Netherlands were unable to live happily under his rule. Yet, in the light of his own time,—which, let us bear this in mind before we presume to judge him, was not that of the nineteenth century nor that of the twentieth,—Philip of Hapsburg was a progressive ruler. To the best of his ability he tried to perform the task of a modern monarch. So did Elizabeth of England, and, being successful, she earned the love of her subjects and the praise of posterity. As much as great distances and poor communications would allow, Philip tried to unify his dominions and to rationalise their administration. He did great things for Spain, but in the Netherlands he met with resistance and, to a large extent, with failure. The whole of the Netherlands rose in revolt. In one half of the country the revolt was successful: the Northern Netherlands became an independent state, while the South was brought back into obedience and subjected to such uniformity and rationalisation as could be achieved in those days.

I have no wish to plead on behalf of the cold-hearted eccentric of the Escorial. To the historian it matters little what Philip was: he must know what Philip did or tried to do. And Philip II of Spain stood for the ampler life in a wider and better regulated political unit, for government in the name of the master of the state instead of rule by private parties for the sake of their own narrower interests. Philip was carried and directed by the body of doctrines and instincts that is known as the spirit of an age. Monarchist government was in the ascendant throughout christian Europe. In Spain Philip's immediate ancestors put a term to alien rule, and they extended their dominions beyond the oceans. Energies accumulated, for the *reconquista* from the Moorish infidels were now being spent overseas for the spread of catholic christianity, for the greater glory of the Spanish crown, and for the enrichment of the Spanish nation. In Spain itself the nobility had been domesticated and the commons disciplined. It was natural that the king should wish to achieve the same rationalisation in his hereditary Netherlands. Nor, as far as the Netherlands were concerned, was Philip's policy a radical innovation. He merely tried to quicken the pace set by the Burgundian and Hapsburg rulers before him. Under them the Netherlands had acquired a number of common institutions, and their administration, their legal organisation and their finances

already transcended the old principalities to which, by the time of Philip, the levelling name of provinces was being applied as a clear indication that they were no longer isolated duchies, counties and bishoprics. Philip and his advisers planned to form a united kingdom of the Netherlands with Brussels as its capital. It was to have a common representative body, a States General composed of delegates from the nobility, the clergy and the commons. A single collective economic policy was being planned for the larger empire that would embrace the kingdom of the Netherlands and the kingdom of Spain.

There was, then, nothing out-of-the-way or remarkable in the king's behaviour towards his subjects of the Netherlands. The behaviour of his subjects towards him was equally unremarkable. Revolts against royal centralisation occurred in many countries both before and after the Revolt of the Netherlands. The Spaniards had revolted earlier. In France, the seventeenth-century Fronde was the rising of the great nobility and of the upper middle class against royal modernism. The English revolution, though contemporary with the Fronde, differed in one material aspect. From the point of view of evolution it was the future rising against the past. Royal absolutism in England had accomplished its task by the time the upper middle class demanded its share of power. But this is by the way, and, anyhow, it is not the whole story. Where the Revolt of the Netherlands differs from other revolts against royal modernism is in its outcome: it was successful, at least in one half of the revolting territories.

The Revolt of the Netherlands was certainly neither national nor republican. The battle-hymn of its great leader, William of Orange, was a profession of royalism and, one might almost say, of cosmopolitanism. To the majestic strains of the *Wilhelmus*, which to this day has remained their national anthem, the Dutch proclaim that William came from Nassau, in Germany, that he was prince of Orange—which is in France—and that he always honoured the king of Spain. The motto of William's supporters was *Fidèle au Roy jusques à la besace*—"faithful unto the king though it reduce us to beggary". And yet, with equal truth, William's hymn asserted that he remained "true unto death to the fatherland". He was a patriot, in short, and not a nationalist, a man who did not object to the overlordship of Philip of Spain, provided the king allowed the Low Countries the freedom that was their due, Dominion Home Rule, as we might say to-day.

Religion is certainly not to be regarded as the mainspring of the

Revolt of the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Catholics and reformers alike rose against Philip and his representatives, and protestants formed less than one-third of the population when fighting broke out. It was not so much in their religion as in their approach to religion that the Netherlanders differed from their ruler. They were liberals. They had the tolerance of merchants who are in the habit of rubbing shoulders with men from many climes, varying in creed and outlook. They were gentle, on the whole, because they were civilised, and they disliked propaganda by torture. The Netherlanders did not learn tolerance from Erasmus: the great humanist was the product of Netherlandish tolerance. In matters of religion the people of the Low Countries were medieval rather than modern. For the Middle Ages may have been one-sided and restricted, but in the Netherlands they were not fanatical: fanaticism came only when men began to take religion earnestly instead of taking it as a matter of course. Catholics as well as protestants objected to the Spanish Inquisition. They would have been content to live peaceably side by side, and indeed, managed to do so once they had founded the Dutch Republic.

Philip's determination to keep his Netherlands uncontaminated by the heresies that came creeping in from the calvinist south and from the lutheran and anabaptist east was not solely due to narrow intolerance. His father, the emperor Charles V, whose legend lives to this day in the affectionate remembrance of the common people of the Low Countries, issued the severest edicts against the reformed religion. Absolutism, the instrument of centralisation and consolidation, postulated religious conformity, and continued to do so, a century later, in the France of Louis XIV. Religious doctrine had then as much practical importance as have political theories to-day, and liberalism was even rarer than it is with us. But the merchants of the Netherlands happened to be among the exceptions, and, as I have already mentioned, they objected to Philip's Inquisition. Their objections might not have led to action, had they not been strengthened by other causes of discontent. The unifying system of Philip of Hapsburg had many good points, but centralised government has a way of demanding financial sacrifices for which

<sup>1</sup> On Dec. 17th 1576 the States of Holland sent a message to the council of Amsterdam, which at that moment was still catholic and loyal to the king of Spain. In the course of this letter the States said: "In matters of religion, it is true, a certain diversity and distinction may exist between us and yourselves. But this is no reason for remaining disunited and different in the common cause of the country, and concerning the policy, freedom, justice and prosperity of the common fatherland. The less so as *we never took up arms for the sake of religion*" (My italics. Quoted in K 1620, p. 38).

an immediately visible return is not always forthcoming. There were attempts also to impose direct taxation, which may be fairer than indirect taxation, but which can never be collected without reminding the tax-payer of the fact that he is parting with his cash for the benefit of the state.

Philip aroused yet another kind of discontent by his treatment of the nobility of the Low Countries. In England the barons were the last obstacle to unification and the nobility was the greatest difficulty with which Henri IV, Richelieu, and Mazarin had to contend. Builders of modern absolutism have had to work on a fairly uniform pattern. Philip, too, found it necessary to curtail the powers of his noblemen. In many provinces of the Netherlands, especially in the south, they were very influential. A centralising absolutism hurt them in their pride and in their interests. And so the discontent of the nobles of the Netherlands, who had to submit to Spanish governors-general and to middle-class civil servants, added fuel to the general discontent. But whatever the class to which they belonged, and however worthy of sympathy or admiration, Philip's opponents stood for the past, for medieval conservatism, and for the denial of political improvement.

### CHAPTER III

#### A NEW STATE—AND THEN—A NEW NATION

THE epic struggle of the Netherlands against the forces of the kings of Spain,—the Dutch call it the Eighty Years' War,—lasted from 1568 till 1648. It is best known to English-speaking people through the works of Motley, whose vivid narrative has done much to popularise in Anglo-Saxon countries the memory of the heroic struggle of the Dutch. But Motley imagined or invented a Dutch nation, existing as a separate entity, republican and protestant, that rose against a catholic tyrant who had robbed it of its freedom. I have already indicated that the true story is different. It was the whole of the Netherlands, the territory which is now Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, as well as a portion of Northern France, that revolted against its Hapsburg ruler. At the time of their revolt the people of the Netherlands could not have been called a nation. Nevertheless, an incipient sense of nationality was perceptible among them. Nationality is a matter of consciousness; men belong to the nation to which they feel that they belong. A

Dutch historian has examined the entries made by between ten and fifteen thousand students and artists from the Low Countries in the registers of Italian universities and academies.<sup>1</sup> He found that, until about 1560, they wrote down only the principality from which they hailed and described themselves as *Friso*, *Brabantinus*, *Geldrus*, *Zelandus*, *Hollandus*. About 1560 provincial designations began to disappear, and all students, whether they came from the north or from the south of the Low Countries, described themselves indifferently as *Belga*, or *Flamengus*, either of which simply means Netherlander.

The revolt was not equally successful in every part of the Netherlands. Owing to its special geographical features the north-western section of the country alone was able to persevere in its resistance against the Spanish armies. Elsewhere, the arms of Spain were triumphant. At a later stage, the liberated populations sallied forth from their north-western bastion. What they reconquered to the east and to the south they added to the territory they already held. Together, these emancipated lands formed the seven provinces of the Dutch Republic, known officially as "the United Provinces of the Netherlands". What was not permanently liberated remained the property of the kings of Spain, who restored the monopoly of catholicism and established modern absolutism in their dominions.<sup>2</sup> In the liberated north protestantism, although the religion of the minority, acquired a privileged position. But catholicism was tolerated.

An accurate story of the War of Liberation will be found in *The Revolt of the Netherlands* by professor P. Geyl. It will be enough, in the present survey, to recall a few salient facts. In 1567 the duke of Alva arrived with his Spanish and Italian troops, and a reign of terror began which was indeed highly effective in suppressing the rebellion. Realising that resistance in every part of the country was out of the question, the more active rebels withdrew to the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, where the multiplicity of inlets from the sea as well as the extent of inland waters made it possible for people well provided with small craft to practise a new form of

<sup>1</sup> G. J. Hoogewerff, *Uit de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsch Nationaal Besef*, in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 1929, nr 2.

<sup>2</sup> An idea of the thoroughness with which the Spanish authorities took in hand the re-catholicisation of the Southern Netherlands can be gathered from the ordinance of the archdukes, issued in 1608. (*Placcaet ende Ordinancie van de Erzhertogen*, printed in Brussels, Rutger Velpius, 1608.) Teachers, performers of the popular "plays of rhetoric", were subjected to the most stringent supervision. The books of deceased persons could not be taken over by their legatees before they had been approved by the censor.

mobile warfare. Prince William of Orange, a high official of king Philip, and his representative or "stadtholder" in the provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, placed himself at the head of the rebels. At one time only Holland and Zeeland were free; all the other territories were held down by Spanish arms. A serious mutiny of Spanish troops, known as the Spanish Fury, brought about the collapse of the Spanish administration (1576). To safeguard public order the reconquered territories united and resumed the fight. But this general resistance, in which catholics and protestants took an equal share, collapsed, partly owing to the arrival of new and disciplined Spanish troops, but mainly as a result of the splendid generalship and wise statesmanship of a new governor-general, the duke of Parma. By 1590 the frontier between the liberated north and the reconquered south had become more or less fixed, and the struggle assumed the aspect of a normal war between the Dutch Republic and the forces of Spain. In 1609 the king of Spain gave *de facto* recognition to his rebellious subjects by concluding a twelve-years' truce with them. They were already diplomatically represented at several European courts. In 1648 came recognition *de jure*, when Spain signed the Peace of Munster with the Dutch Republic. By this time a vigorous Dutch patriotism had taken the place of the rudimentary Netherlandish national consciousness of the previous century. The masters of the new Republic, who had their own reasons for wishing to prevent the Southern or Spanish Netherlands from competing with the busy ports of the North, did all they could to stifle the old incipient national consciousness while fostering the new. Let us now find out what manner of men were these new masters of the new republic.

#### CHAPTER IV

### Dictatorship of the Upper Middle Class

**H**ISTORICAL events have a tendency to arrange themselves into patterns. One might say that they have habits. We dignify these habits with the name of laws.<sup>1</sup> We speak of the laws of history, and to this there can be no objection, provided we remember that events do not obey laws, but make them. Subject to this reservation, there is a law that political power tends to follow economic power. The class that controls wealth will eventually

<sup>1</sup> See F. G. S. Schiller, *Formal Logic*, ch. XXI, and *Logic for Use*, pp. 408 sqq.

become the class that rules. Powerful factors may delay the operation of this law, but their veto has no finality.

The industrious populations of the territory which was to become the Dutch Republic were not democratic. It is true that at one time, in these communities that were so largely urban, the common people exercised considerable influence upon local government. Throughout the Netherlands men who worked at the same trade united in guilds. The movement began in Flanders and Brabant, and spread to Holland and Zeeland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the fourteenth century the guilds acquired much power in the towns. In Utrecht, for instance, they annually appointed the members of the town administration. But the community was too busy, and became too exclusively interested in its business, to exercise democratic control. Gradually it was left to the wealthier among the citizens, who could better afford the time, to fill the vacancies which arose in the town administrations. Simultaneously the officers of the guilds, who were *ex-officio* members of the town administration, began to look upon their offices as a right to which they were entitled for life. There was no revolt. The change was dictated by common sense, and in the course of the fifteenth century the practice of oligarchic government became almost universal.

Let us take a concrete example. In 1445 the town of Delft was granted by Philip, duke of Burgundy, a Privilege which regulated a situation that was already in existence. The Privilege laid down that "the wise and the rich" among the inhabitants of the town were to choose forty persons, "the richest, the most honourable, notable and peaceful" among themselves. These forty citizens would henceforth be known as the *vroedschappen*, the "wise men". They were "the regents" of Delft, and formed "the broad council" of the town. If one of them ceased to reside at Delft, or died, his colleagues were to co-opt his successor from among the richest and most notable inhabitants. Once a year it was the duty of "the forty" to draw up a list of twenty-two men, who were "the very richest, the most honourable and the most peaceful", and from these twenty-two the duke or his representative selected one half, who formed the administration, or "government" of the town for the coming year. It consisted of four burgomasters or administrators-in-chief, and seven *schepenen* or aldermen, whose principal office was the administration of justice to their fellow citizens. Though not bound to do so, the forty always nominated the twenty-two from among their own number, so that in fact the eleven seats of

burgomasters and aldermen, as well as the three or four annual appointments of "wardens of the orphans", were all reserved to the limited oligarchy of forty. Those among the forty who were not in office were consulted by their fellow regents upon a number of important occasions, when all the forty met in what was known as "the broad council". The duke's charter was renewed from time to time. With certain unessential differences, such as the number of regents or of burgomasters, the same system prevailed in every Dutch town.

It was one of the prerogatives of the urban regents to appoint representatives to the Estates of the principality to which they belonged. Now and then the dukes and counts consulted the representatives of the nobility and of the towns, who met for brief and infrequent sessions. Such limited influence as the Estates or States of the principalities possessed was to a large extent in the hands of the towns. In Holland, for instance, the nobility had one vote and the twelve or more towns that were represented had one vote each. If we remember that this vote was given by a regent who was accountable to no one except the fellow regents of his town, we shall see at once that in Holland at any rate the urban oligarchy were for all practical purposes the masters of the Estates. In other principalities, such as Gelderland, the power of the nobility was greater. But everywhere the towns, and therefore the urban patriciate, wielded considerable power in the local States.

During the three closing decades of the sixteenth century, while the struggle against Spain proceeded with varying success, the urban aristocracies of the free provinces seized power in the country, and proclaimed their right to do so. It is not within the scope of this survey to enter into the details of the military or of the political and social struggle. But the main aspects of a development which coloured the history of the Dutch Republic until its downfall in 1795 should be briefly noted. The urban regents undertook a twofold task. In the first place, they asserted and defended their authority against that of the legitimate sovereign as well as against the legal and institutional relics which his sovereignty, after its abolition, had left behind it. Moreover, the popular mind had preserved to a considerable extent the monarchical instincts which are the common heritage of mankind. These tendencies occasionally became identified with a temporary and transient revival of the medieval democratic spirit that had existed in urban life before the rise of the oligarchies. To fight this democratic spirit was the second part of the regents' self-imposed task. When, in 1581, the States of



Holland issued an edict forbidding town administrations to consult the representatives of the citizens or of the citizens' militias on any matter of administration, they showed once and for all how the bourgeois oligarchy meant to deal with democracy. The doctrine of popular sovereignty was not unknown in the Low Countries. The duchy of Brabant had, since 1356, a constitution which proclaimed the right of the people to withdraw their obedience from a tyrannical ruler. Similar principles, adorned with classical reminiscences and stiffened with calvinistic rationalism, made their appearance in the writings of political theorists at the time of the revolt of the Netherlands. When, in 1581, the Dutch solemnly renounced their allegiance to Philip II of Hapsburg, they did so in the name of these principles. At the same time care was taken by the men who proclaimed the sovereignty of the people to make it abundantly clear that it should be exercised by themselves and not by the people. They, the patricians, were to act as the trustees of the people. In 1587 François Francken, an official of the town of Gouda, published a treatise on the legal rights of the States of Holland, in which he asserted that 800 years earlier these States, representing the nobility and the towns of the county of Holland—the sole holders of the sovereignty in their county—had freely entrusted the count with the exercise of this sovereignty, without, however, parting with the sovereignty itself.

Of all the authors who propounded the theory of the ancient sovereignty of the States the most famous is Grotius (1583–1645). As a true humanist he appealed to antiquity for the justification of the claims made by the regents. Following in the footsteps of less illustrious authors, he wrote his *Parallelon Rerum Publicarum* and his *Liber de Antiquitate et Statu Reipublicae Batavae*, in which he argued that the ancient Batavians were the direct ancestors of the Dutch of his age, and established, with ample quotations from Strabo on the Celts, Cæsar on the Gauls, and Tacitus on the Germans, that the Batavians were ruled by their *optimates* or patricians, while their king was a mere *dux*, a leader with limited powers. The conclusion of these learned dissertations was that the Estates had been at all times in the fullest possession of sovereignty. The value of the arguments adduced by Grotius is on a par with those he used in justification of Dutch national sentiment, a feeling which, as I have mentioned, the oligarchs liked to foster among their fellow citizens. Grotius expatiated upon the high cultural level achieved by the early Batavians. They were far more civilised, he said, than their Teutonic neighbours, while they had much in common with the

Gauls. Of course, when Grotius wrote, the eastern neighbours of the Dutch were the Germans of the period immediately before the Thirty Years' War, while the Gauls were represented by the French of Henry IV who were already the leading nation of Europe. Grotius noted that Latin and Dutch had many words in common. But let it not be thought that this resemblance indicated a cultural indebtedness on the part of the Batavians. On the contrary, it was the ancestors of the Dutch from whom the Romans had learned ! "*Nam caseum nobis, et mare et ventum quis non ut nostra concedat ?*"—Who would deny us our cheeses, our meres and our winds ? "

Scientific historiography was indeed in its infancy. A theory had to be proved. No need to gather facts: fantasies provided respectable arguments. Let us think kindly of Hugo Grotius. He has been dead for three centuries. In our own time a new historiography has obliterated all that has happened since his days, the learned French Benedictines of the seventeenth century and *L'Art de Vérifier les Dates*, eighteenth-century rationalism, and German criticism of the nineteenth. With the cultured Teutons of the first century A.D. and the barbarous hordes of the southern invader Varus, the wheel has come full circle, and invention rules on the ruins of the seminars of Leipzig and Berlin. Three centuries ago the doctrines of Grotius were universally accepted by the Dutch, and no one denied the sovereignty of the provincial States, though many disliked it.

In practice, the recognition of the sovereignty of the provincial States meant the domination of the whole republic by the upper middle class. The States of Holland were dominated by the urban regents. In Zeeland too the towns had all the votes but one. The situation was more complicated in some of the other provinces. In Gelderland the nobility was powerful, in the States of Friesland the small landowners were strongly represented. But the rich province of Holland provided 58 per cent of the total income of the federal treasury, and the power of the purse, strengthened by the support which the urban regents from other parts of the country usually gave to the leading oligarchic province, placed Holland in a privileged position and enthroned the principle of class dictatorship. In the province of Holland this dictatorship of the urban oligarchy was a tangible reality. The sovereign provincial States met about six times a year. To their meetings at The Hague went delegations from the nobility and from each voting town. Whatever number of deputies a town chose to send, its delegation had a single vote, or, more accurately, a voice that was regarded as single. For there was

no actual counting of votes. Each delegation in turn expressed its opinion, the representative of the nobility always speaking first. The chairman, having listened to all in turn, summed up the sense of the meeting. Frequently, on major issues at any rate, agreement was not reached at once. The delegates were usually given a binding mandate, and if they found themselves in a minority, the session of the States was suspended, and the deputies "took a turn home" to consult "their principals". Once more they journeyed to The Hague, bringing with them perhaps a suggested compromise, and fresh discussions began. The towns, of course, were not sovereign, and it was possible in theory for the sovereign provincial States as a whole to impose their will upon the dissentient minority, if it was sufficiently small. But this was rarely necessary. The chairman's skill occasionally made his diplomatic summing up of the debates acceptable to all parties. There was also room for bargaining. Furthermore, the institutional chaos had a redeeming feature: the matter-of-fact common sense of the Dutch. Two generations later, that great English expert on Dutch affairs, Sir William Temple, remarked: "In these Assemblies, though all are equal in Voices, and any one hinders a result; yet it seldom happens, but that united by a common bond of interest, and having all one common End of Public Good, They come after full Debates to easie Resolutions; yielding to the power of Reason where it is clear and strong; And suppressing all private Passions or Interests so as the smaller part seldom contests hard and long, what the greater agrees of".<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, were the States of Holland, and, *mutatis mutandis*, the States of the other provinces. Now, under the stress of war, these different provincial States drew together and formed an alliance. This was in 1579, when the danger of a total reconquest by the armed forces of the king of Spain was serious, and when, local sovereignties notwithstanding, it became indispensable to forge an instrument of collective resistance. The provinces that ranged themselves round Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, then the focus of resistance, formed an alliance. The famous Union of Utrecht, intended for a particular war-time situation, was merely a fighting alliance between seven sovereign states. But by the time the Dutch Republic had become a going concern and signed a truce with the enemy, the Union of Utrecht remained the only written constitution of an absurdly medieval and decentralised federal state. The component parts of this state, "the Allies", as they were in the

<sup>1</sup> *Observations upon the United Provinces*, 1671.

habit of calling themselves, were Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overysel and Groningen. Let us continue to call this federation not by its official name, "the United Provinces of the Netherlands", but by the name of "Dutch Republic", which was current usage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We shall avoid confusion not only with the historical Netherlands, which consists of the independent Dutch Republic and of the territories that remained Spanish, but also with this Belgian half, which in the seventeenth century, and especially in the eighteenth, was usually called "the Netherlands".

The most important federal organ of the Republic was an assembly called the States General. It was not sovereign, but acted on behalf of the seven sovereign provinces, and, towards the outside world, represented the collective sovereignty of the Republic. It appointed the ambassadors of the Republic, and received the ambassadors of foreign Powers. "Their High Mightinesses" negotiated with foreign Powers, and signed treaties, for in its relations with the outside world "the Generality" was determined to present a united front. The States General administered the "Generality Lands" or territories reconquered from the Spaniards after the establishment of the Union of Utrecht (Zeeland-Flanders and Dutch Brabant). The States General had a number of other functions, but, in theory at any rate, they exercised them by permission, not by right. The coercion of one of the sovereign "Allies" was unlawful, and a unanimous vote was therefore indispensable. Each province was free to send to the States General as many representatives as it wished. Each provincial delegation, however, had only one vote. As was the case in the provincial States, common sense and expediency usually made it possible to smooth over the absurdities of administrative medievalism. Men in the possession of their normal faculties could not, after all, expect that the Province of Overysel, which contributed 3 per cent of the federal revenue, should in practice have as much power as the province of Holland which paid 16 per cent more than all the other provinces combined. As nothing could be done without the co-operation of the wealthy Hollanders, their province usually exercised a *de facto* hegemony in the Republic. If the Generality funds were low, Holland was often ready to advance money. On the other hand, the Generality sometimes invited Holland to carry out on its behalf a decision taken by the States General. There were other factors making for unity in the federal chaos. But two major facts must be noted before we proceed with this survey of the Dutch Republic. In the first place,

although the Revolt of the Netherlands was reactionary from the purely political point of view, it was at the same time a social revolution which transferred political power to a class which had for some time held economic power without its political equivalent. By establishing the rule, and indeed the dictatorship, of the upper middle class, the Revolt of the Netherlands became progressive and modern. It did for the Dutch bourgeoisie more than the civil war was able to do for the English upper middle class in the seventeenth century; it accomplished what 1789 and 1815 did for the French. The second fact to be observed is that there was no going back upon this conquest of power by the upper middle class. Even when the party that opposed the supremacy of the States of Holland in the Dutch Republic was in power, it governed, as we shall see, through members of the same class whose economic interests and prejudices were indistinguishable from those of the Holland regents. The difference was superficial. It affected the medieval state policy of the regents, not their progressive class policy. From beginning to end the Dutch Republic was a Commonwealth of Merchants with a medieval constitution, but with class relations such as existed elsewhere in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century, with powerful monarchist instincts that were only half stifled by a republican form of government, with an intense and almost precocious national consciousness, and also with an inherent tendency towards an organisation in which the classes below that which was dominant would be able eventually to achieve their share of power.

To understand what happened in that amazing laboratory of social history we call the Dutch Republic we need the higher impartiality which is the fruit not of indifference, but of imaginative insight. We may choose to believe that, in the course of normal social evolution, economic and political power tends to be shared by an ever-increasing number of members of the social body. But this does not imply that we may judge the past by our own progressive criteria. Professor Jan Romein, whose fascinating history of the Low Countries<sup>1</sup> enjoyed a success that went far beyond the circles where his Marxist views were acceptable, sinned through lack of historical sense when he portrayed the upper middle class in the Dutch Republic as wicked oppressors. He overlooked the fact that what is wrong to-day may have been right three centuries ago. In the Dutch Republic a dictatorship of the proletariat or even a democratic regime would have been a catastrophe. The natural successor to feudalism was the concentration of power in the hands

<sup>1</sup> *De Lage Landen bij de Zee.*

of the upper middle class—and in most countries monarchist absolutism was needed as a transition between the two. The Dutch managed to shorten the period of transition. Their class policy may therefore be said to have been unusually progressive. Seen in the light of their own times, the Dutch regents were socially as enlightened as Philip II was enlightened from the political point of view.

## CHAPTER V

### A MONARCHICAL REPUBLIC

THE deliberate myth-building of the republican oligarchs was powerless to obliterate from the institutions of the Dutch Republic and from the minds of its inhabitants the potent relics and strong memories of the monarchical past. Survivals of the days of one-man rule made reality more complex even than the brief constitutional sketch I have drawn in the previous pages. Side by side with the new-fangled sovereignty the older brand of sovereignty continued to exist. In the early days of fighting enthusiasm there was no clash between the two, but at a later stage they were the nuclei round which two antagonistic parties formed themselves. Nothing, however, was simple in the medievalist Dutch Republic, and even this is an over-simplification. For the party that opposed the political dictatorship of the Holland regents acted, and governed when it could, through men who came from the same social class from which the regents of the States party were drawn. In other words, it approved of their social dictatorship.

The old sovereignty was represented by the princes of Orange. The first of their line to play a part in the history of the Dutch Republic was William of Orange, known as William the Silent. Born in Germany in 1533, he inherited the principality of Orange, in France, and the territories held by the Nassau family in the Burgundian lands and in the Low Countries. In 1558 Philip II appointed him stadtholder of the provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht. The word "stadtholder" is a literal equivalent of the word "lieutenant", and the stadtholder was the *locum tenens* of the sovereign. Born in the lutheran faith, brought up a catholic for reasons of expediency, William of Orange not unnaturally grew into a liberal, a man with a profound religious faith who was indifferent to the dogmatic and ritualistic disputes that divided the christians

of his day. He was one of the leading noblemen of the Low Countries, and took part in the agitation against Philip's modernising reforms. He disapproved of efficiency brought about by curtailing the power of the nobility, and of uniformity achieved by persecuting the unorthodox. In 1567 he resigned his offices in the Netherlands and threw himself heart and soul into the opposition. His birth, his wealth, but also his high character and his ability, made him leader of the revolt. In 1568 he announced that, as independent ruler of the principality of Orange, he was taking up arms against Philip of Hapsburg, the king of Spain. To the end of his days William looked upon the struggle as a legitimate war waged by one sovereign prince against another.

When in 1572 strategic considerations induced those who were determined to continue their resistance against the Spanish troops to adopt as their base the provinces of Holland and Zeeland in the north-western corner of the country, the States of these provinces recognised William of Orange as their stadtholder. There was a breach of nearly five years, therefore, in the continuity of William's tenure of the ruler's lieutenancy. But the breach did not matter: were not the provincial States the sole and legitimate sovereigns of the provinces? William of Orange was still stadtholder, lieutenant, but of the States, this time, and no longer of the king of Spain. Such, no doubt, was the legal position, provided one accepted the legal fiction of the sovereignty of the States. Tradition and psychological factors, however, intervened and played a decisive part. The process was remarkably subtle. To begin with, its operation was hardly perceptible in the days of William the Silent himself, and it revealed itself in full only under his successors. For William and the States were faced with a military threat from outside, and with internal treason. William himself fell, in the end, to the bullets of king Philip's fifth column. The States and the stadtholder did not quarrel. Nevertheless, as an institution, the stadtholdership, never constitutionally defined or circumscribed, gathered round it many of the trappings and some of the aura of sovereignty. When, at last, men came to look at it more closely, they found that the stadtholder held not only those powers which the sovereign States wished their lieutenant to possess, but also a number of those which, in the days of hereditary rulers, were held by their lieutenants. The stadtholder in the Republic, like the stadtholder of earlier days, selected the officers of each town from the list of regents submitted to him. He played, in other words, a considerable part in the appointment of the members of the sover-

dign States who were his masters. So it came to be that, exactly a century after the States of Holland and of Zeeland made William the Silent their stadtholder, Sir William Temple could describe the position of the stadtholder in these terms: "... as the States-General represented the Sovereignty, so did the Prince of Orange the Dignity of this State, by publique Guards, and the attendance of all Military Officers; by the application of all Forreign Ministers, and all pretenders at home; by the splendour of his Court, and magnificence of his Expende, supported not only by the Pensions and Rights of his several Charges and Commands, but by a mighty Patrimonial Revenue in Lands and Sovereign Principalities and Lordships, as well in *France, Germany, and Burgundy*, as in the several parts of the Seventeen Provinces; so as Prince *Henry* was used to answer some that would have flattered him into the designs of a more arbitrary power, that he had as much as any wise Prince would desire in that State; since he wanted none indeed, besides that of Punishing men, and raising Money; whereas he had rather the envy of the first should lye upon the Forms of Government; and he knew the other could never be supported without the consent of the people, to that degree which was necessary for the defence of so small a State against so mighty Princes as their Neighbours".<sup>1</sup>

In this strange New Republic where nothing could live that was unable to claim precedent and the sanction of tradition, in this progressive Commonwealth of Merchants constricted by a strait waistcoat of spurious-antique sovereignty, a duality arose, one among many. A never-ending game of see-saw was played between the sovereignty of the States—about as genuinely medieval as the Castle of Otranto,—and the shamefaced, fractional, sovereignty of the princes of Orange. The truth is that neither could do without the other. The tragedy is that it took the two of them and the common people of Holland more than two centuries to find this out. The final discovery came with the loss of sovereignty and independence which was the temporary gift of the French revolution and Napoleon. Meanwhile, the States party and the orangists fought as bitter and as epic a struggle as any that ever split an independent country. Grievous, even heinous, mistakes were made by both sides. Though historians of the Dutch Republic have nearly always been supporters of one or the other party, the true history of the Republic will never be understood till it is realised that, to a large extent, the fight lacked reality. Republicanism and semi-monarchism were accidental. On the one hand, there was an absolute and unbroken

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, ch. II.



continuity in the social structure of the country; the dictatorship of the upper middle class was real from the birth of the Republic until its death. On the other hand, the States and the princes needed each other, the country needed both, and some of the best elements in the country were more than half aware of the fact. It is true, nevertheless, that both parties took a biased view of their own historical mission and failed to conceive the possibility of a higher, national, synthesis. In other words, human nature being what it is, the clash, though unnecessary, was inevitable.

One of the factors that strengthened the position of the house of Orange was the initial weakness of the Republic and the unsettled frame of mind of its people. It is difficult for human beings to cut the link that joins them to their hereditary rulers. Human beings are monarchist by nature. Ever since the strongest male led the ancestral herd, social groups have followed a master. When primitive human reason tried to find sanctions for things as they were, taboos and beliefs draped a protecting cloak round the shoulders of the leader who developed into a sacrosanct collective father-figure. It is impossible to understand the history of revolutions if one loses sight for a single moment of the important part this collective father-figure still plays in human psychology. No sooner is the sacred figure dethroned than a substitute must be found. If the dethroned ruler is executed the search for a substitute becomes all the more passionate and urgent: remorse stimulates the aching consciousness of a void.

The tough regents of the early decades of the Dutch Republic were not free from atavistic promptings. Like ordinary men they felt frightened in the dark and looked for a ruler. They turned south and they turned west, and begged France and England to let them have a monarch. No doubt they rationalised, as historians have done after them, and as human beings do all day long. They argued, and William of Orange agreed, that the rebel provinces must not offend the feelings of mighty neighbouring princes. Their *Wilhelmus* anthem, as we saw, was a profession of monarchist loyalism. They also argued that the support of a strong neighbour was indispensable against Spain, then the dominant state in Europe, and that the offer of the country's sovereignty was not too high a price to pay for powerful protection. One of these attempts to find a sovereign, however, proved that power-politics were not the prime motive of this search for a ruler. It took the form of an offer of the title of count to William of Orange who was not in a position to bring resources to the Republic that were not already at its

disposal. The offer, made in 1583, was, in any case, more formal than real. William was to be sovereign in his dealings with foreign powers, but was to recognise and observe the internal sovereignty of each of the provinces.\* He was to occupy the position which, a few years later, became that of the States General.

Habits were rapidly acquired in those revolutionary days. The regents became used to being emancipated. Responsibility and action provided an effective antidote to the dependence upon a symbolic progenitor. Gradually the regents realised that they were republicans. By the middle of the seventeenth century members of the States party were familiar with the terminology and the ideals of republican Rome, and talked of freedom in the language of the French Jacobins of the eighteenth century. But the common people never forgot. They read neither Livy nor Tacitus, and the paradoxes of Grotius were not for them. They continued to look upon the princes of Orange as the natural *Hooge Overheid*, the "Paramount Authority" in the State. It is true, nevertheless, that even the people, at any rate in the province of Holland, learned to dislike the idea of personal sovereignty. A proof of this was given in 1676 when they supported their regents in refusing the title of duke to William III. But their obscure and untheoretical monarchism was not affected by this event. They remained devoted to the stadtholders and to the house of Orange, and they never were happy when the States party managed to dispense with a "Paramount Authority" and to run the country without appointing a stadtholder.

In the days of the first William, as we saw, the regents of Holland did not think of opposing the prince of Orange. Not only did he become stadtholder of all the provinces, but he was, moreover, captain-general and admiral-general, commander-in-chief of the federal army and the federal navy. His powers were real and extensive. Assisted by a council of state, he conducted all warlike operations and foreign negotiations, while, on the other hand, the States General had not yet acquired all the powers which were soon to be theirs. When William was murdered by one of the men who were moved by fanaticism and the hope of Spanish gold, the States of Holland appointed his son as their stadtholder. Other provinces followed, with the exception of Friesland and Groningen, where a brother of William—a direct ancestor of queen Wilhelmina—was appointed. The federal offices of William passed to his son Maurice. But, while making this inevitable appointment, the States made it clear that the succession was not automatic and that the stadtholder

was their appointed officer and not their born master. For many years collaboration between the regents and the young prince remained as harmonious as it had been with his father. The enemy was still at the gates.

To be a prince of Orange, however, and to be the contented servant of a republic of merchants, was a contradiction in terms. Sooner or later, and certainly not later than when the safety of the state had been secured, the princes were bound to make an attempt to solve the contradiction. Only one solution could appeal to them: dynastic aggrandisement. Had they taken any other course, they would not have been worth their salt, they would not have been the great princes they were. It is customary for Dutch historians to ignore the fact that the princes of Orange have more than once endangered the interests of the Republic for the sake of their dynastic policy, or to blame the princes for it. It should not be impossible to approach the subject in a different spirit. The reader of historical writings is sometimes discouraged by the feeling that historiography is condemned always to fall into one or other of two extremes: if it is successful in divesting itself of the crude colours of partisanship, it acquires an effete and spurious objectivity. We know, love and distrust the partiality of Tacitus, Macaulay and Motley. Nineteenth-century rationalism presented us with their counterpart, the man who believes that he is impartial. Ranke proclaimed that the historian must write history *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, so that we may know what actually did happen. This, no doubt, has been the dream of every historian, as it should, indeed, be the ideal of historiography. Ranke's doctrine of objectivity irritated nationalists and moralists, which may be a strong argument in its favour. Nevertheless, it overlooked the fact that no man can present the whole picture, that in selecting the things he deems significant he is compelled to make a choice dictated by a personal vision from which he can never escape. Objective historiography, if we will but admit the truth, is as subjective as partisan historiography—the difference lies in the shamefaced character of its subjectivity. It is generally accepted by all those who do not hold an historian to be a mere palæographer or a collector of archive-transcripts that the historian is entitled not only to have opinions of his own, but even to let them permeate and shape his interpretation of the past. The secret of the success of Croce's doctrines is that, when he called all history contemporary history, born of the pre-occupations and interests of the present day, he provided subjective historiography with most valuable credentials. His pragmatist

doctrine has wisdom and modesty. But should we leave it at that? Is it enough to say that, since it is impossible for men to narrate and describe the past as it really was, they are justified in carrying all their prejudice into the portion of the past which they try to resurrect? Is there not a more commendable approach, a finer partiality, a partisanship which seeks its inspiration in a doctrine that no doubt remains human and therefore fallible, but endeavours, at any rate, to be as catholic, as all-embracing as possible?

Let us imagine an historian who is profoundly aware of the weakness of mankind, of its liability to error, of the fact that so many of its actions are determined by futile or hidden factors. Let us suppose this historian to be deeply impressed by the folly of his fellow human beings—as he must be if he can use his eyes. Yet, as he diagnoses increasingly folly and weakness, he will discover that there is less deceit, ill-will and wickedness than he expected to find. “Nature never made an unkind creature”, said Laurence Sterne in one of his letters. Dutch history is full of errors and misunderstanding, but it is a story without a villain. It cannot be sheer accident that finally brought together the upper-middle-class dictators of the Republic and the ambitious dynasts of the house of Orange, and made them collaborate in the early nineteenth century in laying the constitutional foundation of that genuine democracy in which all oppositions will eventually become fused. The regents did what they had to do, the princes did what they had to do. They were instruments of a power greater than men, of a power that was blind, perhaps, but yet, it would seem, not without a purpose. Seen in the perspective of history the forces that moulded the fate of the Dutch people become human, we can understand them and appraise them justly. None need be white-washed, none need be condemned.<sup>1</sup>

Pride of nobility had its own ethics. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century the prince of Condé allied himself to Spain, the enemy of his kinsman the king of France. Later, Condé returned to France and resumed his position as a Prince of the Blood. Had a commoner adopted this standard of behaviour, he would have been a traitor. We must understand, whether regretfully or not, the dynastic preoccupation of the princes of Orange. We must appreciate why it was that Frederic Henry tried to support the

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fruin, the greatest of Dutch historians, wrote in 1858: “It is about time that, in judging the past of our Republic, we should lay aside old partisanships and should not presuppose that every opinion necessarily implies a judgment for or against the house of Orange”. *Verspreide Geschriften*, VII, p. 423.

royalist cause during the English civil war, even though it was in the interest of the Republic,—as the regents of Holland realised—not to alienate the English republicans. Many instances of similar errors of judgment in the field of international relations will be found in Geyl's *Oranje en Stuart*, published in 1939. While there is no need to condone these errors, it is equally wrong to pass them over in silence.

There was ample justification for the perpetual endeavour of the princes of Orange to increase their power within the Republic. The constitution of the republic was absurd and cumbersome, and anything that tended to concentrate power into fewer hands was a move towards efficiency. In 1609, when the truce was concluded with Spain, Henri IV, friend and well-wisher of the Republic, expressed the view that, for the good of the country, stadtholder Maurice should be given larger powers. Many people in the Republic agreed with the king of France. There was, for instance, no provision in the constitution for arbitration between the sovereign provinces in the event of a dispute between them. It would obviously have been desirable for Maurice to be given the necessary authority, even if it meant sharing this power with a council. But it is a paradox of Dutch history that at times when the princes of Orange were strong enough to put an end to some of the worse vices of the oligarchic system, they made no attempt to do so. No one was ever stronger in the Republic than William III. Yet he did not lift a finger to bring order into the house of which he had become the master. His class outlook, as we shall see, was the same as that of the merchant-princes. As long as they left him free to carry out his own foreign and military policy, he was fully prepared to let them have their own way in most other directions.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEMOCRACY AND CALVINISM

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE did not look upon the reformation as a primary cause of the revolt of the Netherlands. "Religion without mixtures of Ambition and interest", he wrote, "works no such violent effects; and produces rather the Examples of constant Sufferings, than of desperate Actions". In eliminating the change of religion as an essential factor in the origin of the revolt I have followed his example. Even without the advent of

protestantism the Netherlands would have revolted. But it is by no means certain that the revolt would have achieved the partial success which led to the establishment of the Dutch Republic and the birth of the Dutch nation, if calvinism had not stepped in and played a leading part in the conduct of the revolt. The year 1572 and the years that followed display some of the characteristics we nowadays associate with fascism. Electrified by the discovery of a new faith, energetic and enterprising, the calvinists, though they were a very small minority, threw themselves into the fight with an equal disregard of their own safety and of the rights of others. They knew of no compromise. They took cities by force, dismissed the catholic administrations and appointed calvinists in their place, calvinists, let it be said at once, who usually belonged to the very same social class as the regents they displaced. All this was accompanied by much harshness, violence and cruelty, and some of the blackest pages of Dutch history were written in the fifteen-seventies by men who were as intolerant as the Spanish inquisitors. Their behaviour would have been worse, their elimination of those of the old faith more radical, had not prince William of Orange fought for toleration and human decency with all the strength of his being. The result was that when the Dutch Republic settled down to an orderly and legal existence in the 'eighties a regime was established which gave a privileged position to the calvinist religion, the monopoly of public office to its adherents,—and to the majority that remained faithful to the church of Rome, the right to exist in modest obscurity.

The ruthless and purposeful efficiency of calvinism marked the Dutch Republic and the Dutch nation with an indelible stamp. It is no exaggeration to say that even to-day Dutch catholicism is what it is because of the calvinist tradition of the Dutch. Dutch catholicism has an earnestness and a purity which will be looked for in vain in the religion of entirely catholic countries. Towards the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth, the effect of calvinism upon the life of the nation was considerable and immediately perceptible. Later on in the seventeenth century this effect became even more marked. For it is to calvinism that is due the final cleavage of the Dutch into two antagonistic parties that struggled for power till the end of the Republic. The old sovereignty and the new could not have continued to live harmoniously side by side. But the occasion that produced the break exercised a profound influence upon their relations. It is conceivable that some social disturbance would have provided the pretext for the inevitable

rupture, in which case history might have been very different. As it was, the spark was lit by calvinist theologians.

Theology, no doubt, has a history of its own. But can it be studied *in vacuo*? Can one ever understand its development or the evolution of religious feeling if one ignores the social and political background? To understand Chaucer or Shakespeare we must know the world of Shakespeare and the world of Chaucer. Religious history even more than literary history presupposes a knowledge of general history. After all, Shakespeare is the world reflected in the mind and the sensitiveness of Shakespeare. Shakespeare remains Shakespeare, from whatever angle one approaches him. But what is calvinism without the calvinists? While Shakespeare is forever Shakespeare, a calvinist is many things apart from being a calvinist. Dutch calvinists were, originally at any rate, democrats in their blood; they were calvinists because they were democrats, and democrats of a particular brand—revolutionary democrats. "The reformation", says Robert Fruin, "began from below". It began with manual labourers and simple monks, and the middle classes followed. The very essence of Dutch calvinism must be sought in its early social origin.

The sixteenth century, which saw the reformation and the birth of calvinism, is the most epic century in the history of western civilisation and culture. As it began, the horizon of mankind receded into what must have appeared infinity. The world revealed itself a vast globe instead of a limited circle. Presently the Renaissance, the greatest stimulus ever given to the minds of men, reached its peak. It made mankind the centre of human preoccupations, and replaced intellectual authority by rational investigation. Artistic traditionalism gave way to the study of ancient models and of nature. Although this violent break with the past affected the élite in the first place, it also touched plain men and allowed a new wind of freedom to ozonise their stagnant atmosphere. Authority, tradition, the distrust of nature which had almost become second nature in Europe, all these things were either shaken to the roots or blown away. The cures of Rabelais worked far beyond the circles of his patients and of his readers. And while the humanists treated the scriptures like other products of human pens, the Americas began to send their precious metals to old Europe, which went through a process of inflation that had no precedent. The knowledge that so much gold and silver was being thrown into circulation was more potent in its effect than the actual arrivals of bullion. Prices rose, and wages followed, though, as usual, more

slowly. Social differences, differences between the haves and the have-nots, grew sharper. In France, in Germany, and in the Low Countries, there was a marked proletarianisation of the lower classes. In the trail of these changes came social discontent and social strife.

These growing social discontents might have taken many shapes in the Low Countries. There were strikes. There might have been peasant wars and agrarian troubles; there might have been red revolution, had a social revolutionary doctrine been available. Men went about the country, preaching that the church of Rome was a diabolical perversion of true christianity, and that it was the duty of all good christians to emancipate themselves from the church and to go directly to God's word for guidance in their spiritual life. In the eyes of the people the church shared authority with the state. To rise against the church was to rise against the established powers. This is why all the revolutionary tendencies of the age found an outlet in the revolt against the church of Rome. The year 1565, a year of unemployment and appalling misery in Flanders, was followed by the year of iconoclasm, when proletarian crowds burst into the churches and destroyed statues, pictures and other treasures of ecclesiastical art. Though calvinist preachers disapproved, the madness swept northward across the Netherlands.

We know how far from the free investigation of scripture the dogmatism of Calvin wandered, how little there was in common between revolutionary democracy and his theocratic system. There were periods when freedom had little reason to prefer Geneva to Rome. But one thing could not be eradicated from the souls of Dutch calvinists: the fact that their faith had once been a dream of social emancipation. It also left its imprint upon the reformed church of the Dutch. Dutch calvinism never lost its hold upon the proletarian, the labourer, the man of the lower middle class. Over these people the minister—the *predikant*—exercised his vast authority, and through and with them he tried to rule the state. Each parish had its church council or consistory composed of laymen under the chairmanship of their minister. A number of churches were joined into a *classis* or colloquy, and the *classes* of each province formed a synod. All these bodies met frequently and expressed their views upon many matters. They often tried to obtain from the civil authorities measures and edicts against dissenters and Roman catholics. But they usually found themselves opposed by the urban and provincial regents who, though members of the established church, had no share in its democratic and revolutionary tradition and did not approve of its intolerance.



Public order, prosperity, and the inviolability of their own class privileges were all the fruits which the regents expected from good government. The same merchant toleration which once turned the regents against the Spanish inquisition now set them against the ardent monopolistic zeal of calvinist democracy.

## CHAPTER VII

### ASPECTS OF DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

IN the middle of the eighteenth century Monsieur de Voltaire wrote a little story which he called *Histoire des Voyages de Scarmentado écrite par lui-même*. It was the tale of a wanderer who visited Rome, France and England in quest of truth, and found nothing but foolish quarrelling and ugly violence. "I proceeded to Holland", says Scarmentado, "where I hoped to find greater quiet among a more phlegmatic people. As I reached The Hague, they were cutting off the head of a venerable old man. It was the bald head of the principal minister Barneveldt, the man who, more than any other, had deserved well of the Republic. Moved by pity, I asked what crime he was guilty of, and whether he had committed treason against the state. 'He has done worse', was the reply of a minister in a black cloak. 'He is a man who believes that we can save ourselves by good works just as well as by faith. You realise that if such opinions were to become current, no republic could endure, and that severe laws are needed to repress these disgraceful horrors'. A deep politician of the land said to me with a sigh: 'Alas, Monsieur! These good times will not last forever. It is a mere accident that has made our people so zealous. Their true temper inclines towards the abominable dogma of tolerance, and one day it will come to that. I shudder at the thought!' As for me, while the dire epoch of moderation and indulgence was no more than on its way, I hastened to leave a country where severity was softened by no gentle trait, and took ship for Spain."

The brief story told with such philosophic detachment by the great French ironist gives us the end, or rather the climax, of a long development. As the young Dutch nation emerged from the sixteenth century, it carried with it a load of incompatibilities. Within a medievalist constitution existed a monarchist and centralising nucleus. Under the dictatorship of the upper middle class flourished a vigorous revolutionary democracy, whose energies had

been imperfectly canalised within the calvinist church. Wise merchant tolerance uneasily checked the zeal of fanatical ministers. There was, moreover, a world of difference between merchant realism and the militancy of professional soldiers. It was only when the possibility of a truce, if not a peace, with Spain began to be discussed, that this last antithesis declared itself. It is difficult to know how long these and other conflicting tendencies might have preserved an uneasy peace. Nor is it certain that they would have coalesced and sorted themselves out into two major currents, if no occasion for such a grouping had arisen. The occasion was a violent quarrel between theologians, which led to a judicial murder and a coup d'Etat.

In his chronicle of events for the year 1610, the contemporary historian Van Meteren devoted a curious entry to the early stages of these theological disputes. "In Holland, at the University of Leyden, a difference arose among the professors of theology and the ministers, concerning the right meaning of divers points of theology, such as predestination, free will, original sin, etc., questions", the author remarked with more good sense than calvinist zeal, "which smack of curiosity rather than edification. The principal occasion for these disputes was given by Dominus Arminius, professor of Theology and successor of that celebrated and excellent Dominus Franciscus Junius. This Arminius was the first who, by manner of disputation, launched these questions among the students. Thereupon, having found adherents, he presented these points with more vehemence in the schools and in the churches, in different ways of speaking and in a sense other than that in which they were commonly understood and accepted. Against this, Gomarus, fellow-professor of Arminius, made a stand, together with others, by word of mouth in the first instance, in the schools as well as at the meetings. And this Dominus Arminius having died last winter, pamphlets were written and appeared in print, relating what had passed at the meetings, very sharply against each other, to the great scandal of many, seeing that the love of God and of the neighbour were being forgotten. People hoped that church meetings or synods would, with the necessary authority of the ruling powers, prohibit all manner of speaking and teaching other than those expressed and used by Holy Scripture".

Voltaire's elegant sarcasm succeeds in conveying the impression that these theologians' quarrels are unworthy of a wise man's attention. Emanuel van Meteren's awkwardly composed page is impartial less because its author was detached than because both

parties irritated him. He was born at Antwerp, lived in London, and was a merchant by profession and a collector of manuscripts by inclination. Chance made him an historian. His brother-in-law, the famous Antwerp geographer Ortelius, advised him to utilise the materials he had so diligently collected, and to write the story of his own time. He was a calvinist, but when his *Historiën* appeared they shocked the Dutch ministers by their aloofness and their tolerance. In his preface he said that the study of the Revolt of the Netherlands was useful, among other things, because "those of the reformed religion must see from it how harmful their untimely and immoderate zeal has often been to themselves, and how great a confusion has often resulted from it in a number of provinces". He was seventy when he wrote the passage dealing with Arminius and Gomarus, comfortably settled in the security of London, worshipping in St. Austin Friars, content after a long business life that had been enlivened by an intelligent and unusual hobby. He considered that men should be pleased to take their doctrine from the Book without subtilising beyond the powers of their own understanding. Dominus Arminius, he sighed, was very vocal and more than a little odd.

We may be sure nevertheless that, had Van Meteren lived at home, he would have joined one of the contending parties. He would have understood, by then, that the problems which agitated his fellow-calvinists were more than the vain subtilisations of idle divines. They were the frantic endeavour of honest men to encompass divine mysteries within the narrow limits of human reason. As recently as 1870 the ancient church of Rome solemnly declared that there could be no conflict between faith and human reason. Can we be surprised that two and a half centuries earlier the adherents of a very young church, with only a few human generations behind them, should have been lured into the same error of certitude? What divided the calvinist church in the early generations of the Dutch Republic was the perennial incompatibility of order and freedom, of determinism and the spirit of adventure,—a dispute that will continue so long as men are allowed to think for themselves and construct hypotheses based on their own preferences. Nor could Van Meteren see from his comfortable retreat how natural it was that the calvinist church should be torn between its humanist antecedents of toleration and broadmindedness, and its pathetic desire to be as respectable as the church of Rome.

As we have seen, Dutch calvinism never lost the imprint of its

revolutionary origin. But it is equally true, and natural, that hardly were the days of persecution over when the revolutionaries began to crave for respectability. The hearts of those rugged ministers were nearer to Rome than they would have cared to admit. They hated Rome, but they knew that it was blue-blooded. Its discipline had been tightened by the Council of Trent, and the counter-reformation. To the outside observer its doctrine appeared defined and precise. The fondest wish of every protestant minister was to possess the self-assurance of a Roman. This is why the emancipators of the human mind began to define their doctrines with more severity and absoluteness than Rome had ever done. It became easier for a calvinist to be a heretic than for a catholic. While calvinism sought to formulate its views on grace and predestination with geometrical precision, Rome continued to leave to its adherents a considerable degree of latitude in these matters. Jesuits and dominicans stood poles apart, but both remained within catholic orthodoxy. Rome did no more than advise them not to be too vocal. Meanwhile the laborious endeavour to dignify Dutch calvinism by giving it fixity and authority never killed the spirit of humanism and of Erasmus which had presided over the early movement of spiritual emancipation that led away from Rome. Long before the end of the sixteenth century a reaction against dogmatism set in, at least among calvinist intellectuals.

Calvinism had swept away the intermediaries between God and man. Once upon a time it had looked upon this purge as the very essence of its task. The saints, ritual, and tradition had been dispensed with. Man stood face to face with his Maker. But then the calvinist divines began to erect a new barrier of dogma to take the place of the old intermediaries, and the relation between God and humanity was subject once more to definition and circumscription. No greater difficulty could face them while they were framing their doctrines than the inherent incompatibility between God's prescience and His love. Both must be unlimited, since God is absolute. Eternal punishment and hell-fire were dear to the early reformers, who abolished purgatory together with the indulgences that hastened the pace of its cleansing operations. But there was, after all, biblical authority for the statement that God is love, and it could not be denied that whenever God created a human being He must have known at the time that, in some instances at any rate, the creature's behaviour would eventually land it in hell. It requires great powers of reasoning to reconcile this foreknowledge of the creature's doom with Absolute Love. Even the argument that

in His omnipotence God purposely refrained from interfering with the creature's use of the faculties with which He had endowed it, so that damnation was worked out without His active participation, did not dispose of the awkward fact of divine prescience.

These and similar preoccupations were older than christianity. Among the Greeks, those who believed in fate, those who adopted the metaphysics of the stoics, limited or annulled the freedom of men; the gods of the epicureans, on the other hand, showed no concern for the fate of men. The interesting jewish sect of the sadducees also rejected determinism. Christian theorists were obsessed by the problem and could not leave it alone. St. Augustine presented the church with the ingenious verbal solution called "preterition": some people were elected by God's irresistible grace—the others were not damned of set purpose: they were merely passed by. This euphemism satisfied the penitent-Saint,<sup>1</sup> and, somehow, escaped condemnation by the church. St. Augustine always managed to steer clear of heresy by never stating a doctrine except in refutation of what was recognised to be a heresy. One day, as the saint tells us himself, he saw in a vision a child that was trying to empty the ocean by means of a small bucket. He realised that this was the image of his endeavours to comprehend God. He came very near wisdom on the day he wrote this story, but not near enough to put the lesson into practice.

John Milton explained predestination in a way that strikes one as somewhat disrespectful to the Supreme Logician. One might call it the doctrine of dimmed foreknowledge:

*if I foreknew,  
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,  
Which had no less prev'd certain unforeknown.  
So without least impulse of shadow of Fate,  
Or aught by me immutable foreseen,  
They trespass, Authors to themselves in all. . . .*

It is all very difficult, and within orthodoxy the only safe solution is the silence so judiciously imposed by Rome. As we shall see, it was also the solution favoured by the regents of the Dutch Republic. Outside orthodoxy, of course, the choices are many. There was, for instance, Melanchthon's synergism, the collaboration of divine

<sup>1</sup> Augustine was obsessed by his own sinful past. His theology was highly subjective. Human nature is corrupt because Augustine's nature was corrupt. Cf. L. Duchesne, *Histoire Ancienne de l'Eglise*, III, pp. 203-204.

grace and human freedom, which still fails to dispose of the matter of foreknowledge. I used to know a quiet, unassuming member of a catholic teaching order, a young consumptive with whom I sometimes conversed about religion. We were talking one day about the passage in Luke (III, 17), in which the chaff that remains after the winnowing is consigned by John the Baptist to the unquenchable fire: *κατακαύσει πρὸς ἀσβέστον*.—"Ασβέστον", he said, with a quizzical smile. "*Comburet igni inextinguibili*. Do you think that a good translation? It should be 'the fire that does not consume'. But does it matter? Who tells us that those who have been consigned to it must stay there forever? Listen,"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper—"I'll tell you what I think. One day, after aeons of bliss, God's Saints, who will have grown in beauty and understanding through the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, will kneel before Him. And then, in unison, they will beg Him to release the damned from the abyss of pain. *Petite et accipietis, . . . pulsate et aperietur vobis!* The God of Mercy will be unable to resist the unanimous prayer of His Saints!" There was a silence. Then he sighed. "I cannot help it. I find it impossible to love the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to believe in eternal damnation!"

It is always dangerous to drag Divine Love into these matters. One risks falling from the heights of theology into the vagaries of mysticism. Yet there was once a theologian, a grand quarreller before the face of the Eternal, whom nobody as yet has called a mystic, the great medieval thinker Johannes Scotus Erigena, who, in his two treatises *De Divina Praedestinatione* and *De Divisione Naturae*, taught the doctrine of the "eventual return to God". He adduced rational arguments in support of the conclusions my friend drew from meditations upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It would seem, in any case, that the doctrine of the empty hell need derive neither from theology nor from mysticism. The distinguished psychologist Van Biervliet was asked one day: "How is it possible that you, who measure human passions in your laboratory and know how little we are responsible for our actions, can be a practising catholic? How can you believe in hell?"—"Why shouldn't I believe in hell, if the church tells me that it exists?" was his reply. "But I need not believe that anyone will ever get there."

## CHAPTER VIII

## THEOLOGIANS' QUARRELS

IN their desire to codify the doctrines of their church the Dutch calvinist divines embraced the most thorough and the most sombre doctrines of predestination, which left divine omnipotence intact, whatever might have to be sacrificed for its sake. Now the remarkable thing is that those who obeyed the call of humanism and kindness lacked the courage to follow the logic of their instinct. They, too, proclaimed their belief in predestination, but they tried to whittle down the dread dogma by minor reservations. The result is that, in their attitude towards divine foreknowledge, the distinction between the two warring sects of theologians was infinitesimal, and that, viewed superficially, their fight looks like a petty quarrel between Big-Endians and Small-Endians. In truth, however, the distinction belongs to the realm of psychology rather than of logic or theology. These minor reservations to the doctrine of absolute predestination were mainly symbolic. They were a gesture, a proclamation of nonconformity. We shall find that the heterodox were mostly kind and decent people who placed christian charity before the institutional respectability of calvinism. They hated the regimentation of the mind, they would have liked to leave certain matters to the free choice of the faithful. They may not have known themselves that they stood for something greater than the difference of a few epithets. But the proof that they did, nevertheless, is given by the fact that the quarrels of the schools reverberated through the length and breadth of the nation, and led to its division into two parties that were poles apart in their outlook upon life.

Van Meteren may not have been literally right when he placed the beginning of the whole story in the university of Leyden. But he was right in substance. That ancient seat of learning was then in its very early youth. It was inaugurated in 1575, the year after the famous siege of Leyden. One of the early luminaries of the new university was Rudolph Snellius, a scholar who had all the curiosities and all the versatility of the humanists. A hebraist and a mathematician, he was also a keen philosopher. While studying at Marburg in the fifteen-sixties, he fell under the spell of the doctrines of Ramus. Pierre de la Ramée—Petrus Ramus to his humanist colleagues—professor of philosophy at the Collège de France, was

the author of a doctrine upon which orthodox philosophers frowned as much as they did upon that of Descartes in the following century, or do upon those of the pragmatists of our own day. He began his learned career in 1533 by defending the startling thesis "that everything in Aristotle is false". Needless to say, a man of such audacity was bound to become a protestant. He was murdered during St. Bartholomew's Night in 1572. Ramus used to tell his students not to worry about the rules of logic, but to observe Cicero while in the act of reasoning. He was right: the logic of Aristotle holds good only where Greek grammar imposes its exacting rules. Ramus tried to liberate his students from verbalism and to make them aware of the actual processes of human thought. He tried to humanise the study of logic. Whatever may have been the value of his revolutionary teaching, Ramus made men think new and original thoughts, and probe for themselves many things that had been taken for granted before.

In one respect the ramist Snellius differed from his fellow-humanists. They were doughty fighters, whose combativeness found a lasting monument in von Hutten's *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*. But Snellius was a man of peace. Had he been able to read into the future, he might not have taken under his wing a young man called Hermans, who was born in Snellius's home town Oude-water in the province of Holland. Hermans, the son of a poor widow, impressed Snellius by his gifts, and the older man made himself responsible for his education. In 1575 young Hermans went to Leyden, and latinised his name into Arminius. He read theology for six years, and his protector naturally introduced him to the philosophy of Ramus. To finish his education Arminius went to Geneva, the holy city of calvinism. There he lectured on ramism. The brethren in Holland, who hoped that he would one day be an ornament of the ministry, heard rumours from Switzerland and were afraid. But Arminius sent them a collection of glowing testimonials written by professors at Geneva, and the storm subsided, till shortly afterwards worse intelligence reached the ears of the Dutch calvinists. Arminius had gone to Italy and was sitting at the feet of papist theologians at Padua and even in Rome. He was called home, where he found no difficulty in establishing his good faith and, more important, his orthodoxy, whereupon he was made a minister in Amsterdam. There his charity, his learning, his organising ability, were valued, and he showed great courage in the performance of his duties during an epidemic of plague.

A man of Arminius's distinction could not hope to be left outside



the quarrels that agitated his contemporaries. He was a gentle soul, and shrank from disputes almost as much as his master Snellius. But what he held to be the truth was dearer to him even than peace. He was incapable of disguising his liberal inclinations. The gentler doctrines permeated his sermons. In his private correspondence with men of learning and piety, he admitted that he had to part company with Calvin upon certain points of doctrine. These admissions remained no secret. The orthodox challenged him to come out into the open and to condemn some of the more obnoxious attempts to add a touch of kindness to the image of Jehovah. This his conscience forbade, and he felt constrained to confess in public that he was inclined to favour a certain elasticity of doctrine. Although this was taken ill by the orthodox, Leyden was sufficiently broad-minded to offer him the chair of theology that became vacant in 1602. The administration of the university was in the hands of "curators" who belonged to the regent class and who had no sympathy with calvinist intolerance. They knew of the high character and the sound scholarship of Arminius, and his slight deviation from orthodoxy left them cold. Now there were two chairs of theology at Leyden, and Arminius's opposite number was professor Gomarus, a Fleming from Bruges, and a fiery extremist like most of his fellow-exiles. This rugged and intolerant divine protested against the new appointment. A public debate was held between the two professors, but Gomarus's dialectics were unable to extract from his opponent a single statement that could be branded as unorthodox. He was compelled to waive his objections.

There was no peace, however, for the school of divinity of the university of Leyden. The two professors lectured, but as much at one another as to their students. The students took sides, and so did the faithful throughout the country. "An eternal and divine decree", said Gomarus, "has established which men were to be saved, and which were to be damned. As a result of this decree some were drawn towards faith and a godfearing life, and, being drawn, they were preserved from falling back. All the others God leaves to the common corruption of human nature and to their own misdeeds". Here was divine prescience of the damnation of some—or many, and the undiluted doctrine of predestination according to Calvin. Let it not be thought that Arminius rejected prescience—how could he, without limiting divine omniscience?—or predestination. But, obedient to his humanistic instincts, he endeavoured to tone down the more forbidding aspects of predestination. "God", he taught, "has of all eternity established this

distinction among fallen humanity, that those who renounce their sins and place their trust in Christ are granted forgiveness of their sins and life eternal; those, however, who remain impenitent are to be punished. Moreover, it is agreeable to God that all men should become converted, and that, having achieved the knowledge of truth, they should keep to it. But he compels no one." Arminius went further. "Gomarus", he said, "attributes to God the causes of sin, and, by his great insistence upon necessity, hardens the hearts of men." To which Gomarus replied: "The doctrines of Arminius make men more arrogant than do those of the papists. They cannot bear to give to God the sole credit for that which matters most, a righteous disposition of spirit".<sup>1</sup>

A difference arose about what one might call the minor holy books of the calvinist church, and the attitude adopted by the two parties to this dispute illustrates their respective mentalities. Apart from the bible, the doctrines of the Dutch calvinist church were contained in the *Heidelberg Catechism* and in the *Confession* of the reformed churches composed in the early years of the religious troubles in the Low Countries. The gomarists declared that the doctrine proclaimed by their opponents deviated from those expressed in these two venerable documents. The arminians replied that the basic doctrines of these two books were equally compatible with their own views and with those of the gomarists. They added, however, that to remove ambiguities the text of these books should be revised. But a revision inspired by a desire to permit of a certain latitude of doctrine within the calvinist church seemed a blasphemous undertaking to the rigid gomarists. They said that complete uniformity was essential, and that no one should be admitted into the church who could not subscribe to every single word of the two texts as they stood.

Surely, was the retort of the arminians, no man can be denied the right to entertain doubts about the value of human writings, especially of writings composed in a hasty attempt to cope with the early requirements of the reformation. Was not the bible the repository of all religious truth? Formulas qualifying the contents of the bible ought to be as brief and as general as possible. "These

<sup>1</sup> See Wagenaar's *Vaderlandsche Historie*, Vol. X, *passim*. See also the following pamphlets: *Twee Disputatien van de Goddelijke Predestinatie*, which gives a summary of the public debate between Arminius and Gomarus, and was issued in 1609 by the university of Leyden (K 1637). An excellent illustration of the arminian argument, and in particular of the contention that arminianism is in no way unorthodox, will be found in K 1642 of 1609. For a gomarist refutation of the views expressed in this pamphlet see K 1644 of the same year. See also the arminian tract K 1760 of 1610.

are horrible sentiments!" exclaimed the gomarists. True believers, they said, were threatened by so many heresies and so many pitfalls that, for their own protection, they must be provided by the church with authoritative pronouncements on matters of doctrine.

These disputes alarmed the States of Holland. They ordered the theologians to keep the peace, and gave them the somewhat obvious instruction to refrain from teaching any doctrine that was not in accordance with the bible, the catechism and the confession. As both parties were convinced that their own views answered to this description, the order had no effect. The cleavage continued and deepened: the large majority of the ministers sided with Gomarus, while Arminius had relatively few supporters among them. Most regents agreed with his views, though as a rule they showed little inclination to become involved in the dispute. It is said that they found his doctrines easier to understand. One aspect, however, of Arminius's teachings was more likely to bring his regent supporters out into the open. He proclaimed the right of all public authorities to arbitrate in ecclesiastical matters, while the gomarists looked upon the church as the sole judge of doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

Arminius died broken-hearted in 1609. It was not by his own choice that he had become a party in a dispute, and still less the centre of a nation-wide controversy. But, while a lover of peace like his patron Snellius, he was not timorous. Snellius, indeed, never uttered a word in support of the liberal campaign of his disciple. It should be borne in mind, however, that the ramist Snellius was almost as far from the faith of Arminius as he was from that of Gomarus. A man who rejected the authority of Aristotle must have been capable of many other audacities of private thought. As for Arminius, his disappearance made little difference. He was never a leader, and the dispute, which would have arisen without him, was carried on without him. Every calvinist was an indefatigable reader of the bible and of the many pamphlets that poured from the presses. Not one of them failed to take sides. Each parish made up its little collective mind—usually in favour of the gomarists, and refused to listen to ministers who belonged to the other side. In 1610 the arminians addressed an appeal to the States of Holland, a "remonstrance", in which they denied any intention of promoting a change in the country's religion, or of stirring up

<sup>1</sup> The arguments in favour of the supremacy of the States in ecclesiastical matters are set out in an anonymous statement of 1612 (K 2013).

disputes and discord in the Church. They put forth a considered statement of their doctrinal views. The gomarists issued a "counter-remonstrance". Both documents gained wide publicity, and henceforth the arminians were known as "remonstrants", the gomarists as "counter-remonstrants".

The modern reader of these statements is more impressed by what they have in common than by their difference. It is true that, at first sight, the doctrines of the counter-remonstrants offered no inducement whatever to a christian and virtuous life, since they emphasised that man plays no part in his own salvation. But, we shall see, even this difference was in fact cancelled by a qualifying clause added to the counter-remonstrance. Both parties agreed that mankind was corrupt and deserved damnation in everyone of its members. They also agreed that those whom God did not pass by and leave to their fate were made worthy of this favoured treatment only by the grace of God, which took the form of the gift of the christian, i.e. the protestant, faith. And here came the one material difference. The counter-remonstrants held that, once the divine accident of election had operated, the salvation of the beneficiary was necessary and automatic. "How could it be", they asked, "that while the Almighty does everything that is needed for a purpose to be achieved, this purpose should nevertheless not be achieved?" The remonstrants, on the other hand, said that the result of election was not inevitable salvation, but the chance of achieving it. The elected person could still fall from grace if his actions were evil.—Grace is salvation, said the gomarists.—Grace is the indispensable prerequisite for salvation, the necessary instrument of salvation, said the arminians. A man can withstand grace, or he can lose it, they said. Just a little less fatalism, one might almost say, a little less predestination,—even though the amount of divine prescience involved remained the same,—and the Creator's prescience is in practice synonymous with predestination. In fact, however, there is a world of difference between the two conceptions. A fragment of human freedom and dignity was preserved by the remonstrants. They were the true children of humanism. Where behaviour had no significance from the point of view of a man's eternal salvation, strange deviations like those of the ancient manichæans or of the medieval albigensians might easily have developed. But the counter-remonstrants added to their profession of faith the interesting rider that, although conduct did not affect election, a virtuous life was essential as a lasting expression of gratitude for God's gift. Thereby decency was saved, as well as the right of

minister and brethren to interfere with the private life of every one of the elect.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between the two warring conceptions is illustrated in the letters of a remonstrant minister, Dominicus Sapma. They allow us a glimpse into the mentality of the men of that age, and show the delight taken in theological disputes by laymen as well as by clerics. It was in 1621, some years after the events I have just described. Sapma, whose sect was at that time proscribed, had been arrested as a rebel by the counter-remonstrant authorities of Amsterdam. They kept him in close and harsh confinement, questioned him severely and threatened him with torture. On one occasion he was interrogated by an alderman—*schepene*—and two police officers. It is remarkable to see, from Sapma's unvarnished account, how, in the course of this interrogation, both parties forgot their respective positions. Instead of treating Sapma as a miscreant and a law breaker, the officials began to argue with him. How, they asked, could a christian hold views which were so disrespectful towards divine omnipotence? The alderman said that he wanted to ask Sapma a question which he had already put to one of the leading remonstrants. "I wondered", wrote Sapma to his correspondent, "what kind of question this was going to be. Mr. Alderman put the question in this shape: 'If God wished to save a man, say a papist, or a jew, or maybe a Turk, plunged in total blindness—let us suppose He wished to deliver him from this blindness, by bringing him first to a general knowledge of the gospel, and then gradually further on, step by step, till he reached a complete apostolic knowledge, faith and life—could this man resist?' I replied: 'I understand, yes, most certainly'. Thereupon Mr. Alderman said: 'Then this man must be mightier than God?' I answered: 'This does not follow, mijnheer, but it would follow, if God, without the intervention of man's will to obedience, wished to compel a man by force to such a thing. If that is how mijnheer understands it, then I gladly acknowledge that man cannot resist the will of God in such circumstances. However, I must deny most particularly that the Lord wishes,—as we know

<sup>1</sup> This comparison between remonstrant and counter-remonstrant doctrines is based upon the following pamphlets: K 1730, 1766, 1781, and 1794, all of the year 1610; K 1948 of 1612; K 2071 of 1613 and K 2129 of 1614. See particularly a later pamphlet of 1628, by J. Uutenbogaert (in Muller's catalogue 2247 *ter*, not in Knuttel), entitled *Redenen waerom men in goede Conscientie metten Nederlandschen Contraremonstranten gheen geestelijke Gemeenschap . . . plegen en mach*, as well as another arminian booklet *Antwoorde op eenige Vraghen aengaende verscheyden Leerstukken* (1632, no place of issue, 84 pages, Muller's catalogue 2497).

from the Gospel, to produce faith and the conversion of man in such a way'. 'Well', then said Mr. Alderman, 'has man then got the free will to believe and to convert himself, if he wishes?' I replied: 'Certainly not, but to prevent his belief and his conversion—this is the purpose for which he has a free will. This results from the fact that, if man is to believe, there must be two wills. God must be willing to grant the faith, and man must be willing to believe. But for unbelief the will, or rather the unwillingness, of man is sufficient'. 'There again', said Mr. Alderman, 'I cannot understand, unless indeed man is mightier than God'. I said: 'I hope that perhaps I can make this clearer to mijnheer', and I asked him: 'Does mijnheer not think that many things in this world, such as adultery, murder and manslaughter, take place against God's will, or does mijnheer understand that all that takes place in the world happens through God's will?' At this point it seemed to me that Mr. Alderman, noticing what I was driving at, was a little slower with his reply. The officer took up the debate, saying: 'Who would be so godless as to say such a thing? That which God forbids it is His will that man shall not do, as for instance when Herod caused the little children of Bethlehem to be murdered'. 'Well', was my reply, 'I now confront the opinion of Mr. Alderman with that of Mr. Officer in this way: It was not God's will that Herod or anyone else in the world should murder the little children of Bethlehem, and yet, against the will of God, as Mr. Officer admitted, Herod did kill them. Therefore Mr. Alderman will be bound to conclude that Herod is mightier than God'. Whereupon both gentlemen exclaimed: 'This does not follow: God merely allowed it!' I answered: 'Do not the heeren perceive now that they have also answered for me? In the other case, as I said, it also does not follow. And how is it that God permits it to happen? Is it His will or His desire that such things should take place? By no means, for He forbids the deeds that are punishable, but He will not prevent them by force. And this is why I say that God permits a man to resist; He forbids it under penalty, but will not prevent it by force!'"<sup>1</sup>

The issue that was dividing the calvinists, and soon rent the state from top to bottom, may not have been quite as unreal as the iota that divided the Byzantines against themselves. Nevertheless there is no doubt that the dosage of predestination which formed the

<sup>1</sup> *Droeve. Ghevanckenisse ende Blijde Uylkomst van Dominicus Sapma*. A collection of letters published in 1621 (K 3257). Cf. an article on the subject by Van Dillen, in *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen*, "Utrechtsch Historisch Genootschap", LIX, 1938. See further pamphlet K 3276 dealing with the same subject.

object of the bitter quarrel was to a large extent a symbol. Many of those whose fallible reason did not see this must yet have felt it in their bones. Why, indeed, were nonconformists and catholics allowed to worship in private, while the privacy of the remonstrants was invaded, their meetings disturbed and dispersed, first by the mob, and, after the victory of the counter-remonstrants, by the public authorities? It is clear that, though mainly a symbol, the degree of predestination was a mighty symbol. It marked the difference between tolerant humanist traditionalism and intolerant, dogmatic, revolutionary clericalism. It marked the difference between two temperaments, and temperament is the mother of conviction. It marked, finally, the parting of the ways for the two political parties that were, henceforth, going to fight for mastery in the Dutch Republic.

In the last resort, the victory of total predestination and the counter-remonstrants was due to the choice made by the vast majority of the clergy and the theologically minded, and their choice was determined by an elementary psychological factor. It must never be forgotten that, with rare exceptions such as George Borrow's Welsh preacher who believed himself damned because he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, the acceptance of the doctrine of election implies the individual election of the believer himself. In fact, though not in so many words, the counter-remonstrants told each Dutch calvinist: "You have been elected. God has, from all eternity, decreed that you will be saved". The remonstrants, on the other hand, came to each Dutch calvinist with the grimmer message: "God has elected you. See to it that by your conduct as well as by your faith you use this great opportunity of being saved". "Here is paradise", said the counter-remonstrants. "Here is the arduous and narrow path to paradise", said the remonstrants.

That considerable portion of the Dutch population that remained faithful to the church of Rome affected to regard the quarrel between remonstrants and counter-remonstrants as one between two heretical sects with which they were not concerned. In fact, however, they sympathised with the remonstrants, and said that Arminius had been influenced by catholic doctrine during his sojourn in Italy, when he came in contact with cardinal Bellarmini. There can be no doubt that Arminius was familiar with jesuit theology.<sup>1</sup> As the calvinist quarrels increased in bitterness, the

<sup>1</sup> For counter-remonstrant allegations of romanist tendencies among the remonstrants, see a pamphlet by Jac. Taurinus: *Wat Wonder-Of-Nieuws*, of 1618 (K. 2531). In 1628 a

position of catholics became directly affected. The triumph of intolerance made their own position more precarious. The return of gentleness and common sense in the sixteen-twenties once more restored security to their retirement.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLITICS

THE liberal regents of the States of Holland and their supporters were driven into the paradoxical position of having to take police measures to prevent the majority of the calvinist population from worshipping in the manner they considered to be right. The ways of toleration are often inadequate for dealing with intolerance. Justice without a strong arm has proved consistently ineffectual in the history of men. But once force is made the arbitrator, there is a great risk that material resources will weigh more heavily than ethical values. The States of Holland meant well. In view of the vehemence of the religious disputes they issued orders forbidding the discussion of controversial issues from the pulpit.<sup>1</sup> They did what they could to prevent the expulsion of remonstrants from the churches by the orthodox majority. Sometimes town administrations turned a particularly vehement counter-remonstrant minister out of their territory. At Rotterdam Geselius, who had called all remonstrants "seducers and enemies of the church", was expelled from the town by police officers.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon he held his services just outside Rotterdam territory, and crowds of counter-remonstrants flocked out of town to hear him. Encouraged by his fiery predication, they began to hold services of their own in Rotterdam itself. The regents prohibited conventicles under heavy penalties. But in many towns where similar steps were taken, the mob made life difficult for the minority. Sometimes the magistrates themselves sympathised with the counter-remonstrants, and then the mob was able to prevent the remonstrants from worshipping even in private. For, although generally speaking the majority of calvinists, and especially the mob, sup-

pamphleteer introduces a jesuit who says "We hope that arminianism will purge the protestants of their heresies" (K 3793).

<sup>1</sup> See pamphlets K 2056, 2057, 2060, of 1613.

<sup>2</sup> In 1611. Geselius's version of the affair, and that of the Rotterdam magistrates were published together the following year (K 1977).



ported the orthodox, while the magistrates gave their protection and their sympathy to the remonstrants, there were a number of cities where the magistrates favoured the majority. In a few cases the populace actually sided with the remonstrants, but this was undoubtedly exceptional. By 1617 feelings had risen so high that throughout the country the counter-remonstrants were refusing to have any kind of communion with the "false teachers", as they called the minority. The remonstrants in turn were growing harder and more combative.<sup>1</sup> At The Hague, city of diplomats and courtiers, intolerance had not yet reached its high-water mark. A considerable proportion of the counter-remonstrants was still willing to hold communion with the remonstrants. A section of the majority, however, was more uncompromising and seceded to open a church of its own.

In August 1617, as we shall see, the States of Holland decided to take drastic action for the preservation of unity in the church, and the suppression of opposition and rioting. The determined nature of this action shows that the States of Holland had a very clear notion of the issues that were at stake and of their gravity, and more than anyone else their chief officer, John van Oldenbarnevelt, was responsible for making them understand the true position. He had appraised correctly the various and not always congruous elements of the situation, and sorted them out in the light of a consistent political philosophy. He identified the trade interests of his province as a whole with the particular interests of his class. To safeguard these interests, and yet, at the same time, to make his country great and strong, was, in his view, one and the same task. Holland must be the predominant partner in the Republic, the regents must preserve the monopoly of power in the province of Holland. Calvinist democracy, the natural enemy of regent supremacy, must be kept in its place through stern insistence upon the supremacy of the state over the church.

In his youth Van Oldenbarnevelt had been the close collaborator of William the Silent, and the organiser of the revolt which was inspired and led by the prince. He had done more than any man to establish the dictatorship of the upper middle class in the new Republic. Gradually, the diplomacy of the Dutch Republic, the complicated policy of the province of Holland towards the Generality,

<sup>1</sup> The mental background of calvinist intolerance is vividly presented in a pamphlet of 1611 by the minister Caspar Grevinchovius dealing with "the pernicious effects of the freedom of the sects" (K 1906). Complaints about this intolerance in K 2075, of 1613, which also describes the increasing bitterness of the religious disputes and the growing violence of the controversial pamphlet literature.

and, most difficult of all the problems of the day, the defence of the Dutch Republic against its indispensable but powerful friends and protectors abroad, had become his own special preserve. In recognition of his services he was appointed to the post of advocate of Holland, or, as it became known in the days of his successors, of grand pensionary. The nature and function of this office was as complex as were most things in the medievalist Dutch Republic. Perhaps the simplest way of describing it is to say that the advocate or pensionary of Holland was the legal adviser and man-of-business of its sovereign States. He took the chair at the meeting of the States,—and we have seen that the Dutch conception of a chairman's functions made him very powerful indeed. The advocate was spokesman and leader of the deputation of the States of Holland to the States General. In both assemblies he had one great advantage over the other regents, who were delegated by their towns for a few years only. With few exceptions, the regents looked upon their own town as the natural theatre for their political and other activities. To be absent meant losing touch with what mattered most. Delegation was therefore less an honour than an unwelcome obligation. The advocate was the only participant in the activities of the provincial and of the general States who was not ephemeral, who saw delegates come and go, and who acquired in the performance of his functions a store of experience and much familiarity with precedent. Thus it was that the principal civil officer of the province was in fact its president, and, owing to the financial preponderance of Holland, almost the president of the Dutch Republic. It will be seen that if at any time a conflict were to arise between the new republicanism and the monarchist instincts and habits centring upon the person of the prince of Orange, the advocate or pensionary was bound to appear as the prince's main competitor and opponent. He would be looked upon as the embodiment of that which stood in the way of the ambitions of the prince and of those who wanted the increase of the prince's powers. Rightly or wrongly, the advocate was held responsible for the actions of the States of Holland, and had to bear the odium incurred by their policy.

Oldenbarnevelt was the main author of the truce concluded with Spain in 1609. He knew that the war was exhausting the financial resources of the province of Holland. He also knew that the war provided an unfavourable climate for the development of republican institutions. In the teeth of much opposition he carried through his plans for a suspension of hostilities. But his success exposed him to resentment from three sides. Henceforth calvinist

democracy, the town of Amsterdam, and, less overtly at first, prince Maurice of Orange, looked upon him as an enemy.

Not only did the calvinist ministers hold strong views upon many matters besides religion, but they considered themselves entitled to express them freely, and they proclaimed that the authorities must pay due regard to them. Willem Teellinck, a mystic who kept in close contact with the English puritans, voiced the claim of his fellow-ministers to a larger share of political power. "It is difficult", he complained, "to read in the books of the Heeren (the regents). It were better if the common man did not concern himself with the affairs of the state. What he ought to do is to pray the Lord daily to enlighten the Heeren. Unhappily, on barges and in coaches as well as in public eating places the talk is always of what the authorities are doing. Yet the common man can only guess. He knows no secrets".—"Do you then", asked one of the characters,—for like many pamphlets this one was written in the form of a dialogue,—“do you then look upon all ordinary people as poor fools?” To which Teellinck frankly replied, "Yes, I do, as far as affairs of state are concerned". But, he explained, they had their ministers to enlighten them. The ministers had the duty to speak from the pulpit and to tell their flocks what the rulers ought to do.<sup>1</sup>

For the calvinist ministers the war with Spain was a crusade. Spain, still the leading military power in Europe, was the staunchest ally of the church of Rome, and the uncompromising enemy of the reformation. To reach a settlement of any sort with Spain was to compound with evil. Numberless pamphlets adduced every conceivable argument in support of the bellicose views of the ultra-orthodox. These pamphlets were devoured by the calvinist population and, as happened whenever a subject greatly agitated the public, many of them were copied by hand to swell the circulation. A frequently recurring theme was a conversation between the pope and the king of Spain, overheard in a dream by the pamphleteer. These two conspirators agreed that the catholic cause was in a bad way, and could be saved only by an immediate peace. "Once we have peace", said the pope, "those who know our ways will begin to die out, and inexperienced men will take their place. Then our chance will come. So let us make peace, or conclude a long truce with the heretics. It is commonly said that when a town begins to parley it is half taken. We can deceive them now, and reconquer them at a later date."<sup>2</sup> Allegations that catholic doctrine actually forbade the keeping of promises made to

K 1481 of 1608.

<sup>2</sup> K 1399 of 1608; also K 1419, etc.

heretics, and that the bad faith of the Spaniards was as notorious as that of the court of Rome or of the jesuits, were constantly being made.<sup>1</sup>

A lengthy historical disquisition published in Amsterdam argued that it would be morally wrong as well as dangerous for the Republic to suspend the struggle with Spain. "For our States know not only that in its origin their war against Philip is very just, and that it has continued to be a just war; they also know that they may never and at no time desist from it, that they may make no peace with Philip, but are bound to fight this tyrant forever." The author also said: "Shall we tolerate in our Republic the authority of Philip, who wants to devastate and upset, by murder and fire, not only the Low Countries but the whole world? No! Our States shall undoubtedly continue to do all they can to break and drive out this tyranny. They will persevere till they liberate all the Low Countries and re-unite them all."<sup>2</sup> This statement, which is by no means isolated in the polemical literature of the period, is interesting in more than one respect. It shows that, shortly before the conclusion of the truce with Spain, the process by which a separate Dutch national consciousness was to arise had not yet been completed even among the calvinists. Vivid memories of the incipient greater Netherlandish consciousness survived, and, had history taken a different course, they might have stifled the carefully nurtured narrower Dutch national sentiment so dear to the regents. At the same time we may note that the annexationist tendencies of the calvinists placed them in direct opposition to the rulers of Amsterdam, who were shortly to become their allies in the fight against Van Oldenbarnevelt.

On September 20th, 1608, a large whale, in an advanced stage of decomposition, was cast upon the seashore near Scheveningen. This, according to a popular writer, was a portent and a warning. The whale represented the kingdom of Spain, he told his readers, and to have dealings with this kingdom, especially in the shape of peace negotiations, compelled one to breathe in a foul and loathsome atmosphere. "We should have nothing to do with Spain, which is a source of pollution for our lands. You regions and towns whose neck must still bend under the yoke of Spanish servitude" . . . said he, addressing the Southern Netherlands—"you now truly see and experience how false and mendacious were the Spaniard's

<sup>1</sup> On the bad faith of the catholics K. 1299, 1329; of the pope K. 1403; of the Spanish K. 1427.

<sup>2</sup> K. 1491 of 1608.

former complaints, when he told you that he was sorry the bloody war had not ended long since and had not given way to a definite and quiet peace. . . . Spain wants your ruin. Otherwise she would have called back those whom she expelled from your territories and would have given them freedom of conscience".<sup>1</sup>

The animosity of the rulers of Amsterdam against Van Oldenbarnevelt was inspired by motives of a very different nature. The attitude of the rich merchant city is sometimes explained by a strong particularism which drove its citizens into opposition. The grand pensionary and the States of Holland were in the ascendant, and this, it is said, was enough to turn Amsterdam into their enemy. But before the end of the seventeenth century enough examples of ardent support for governments with whose policy it agreed were given by Amsterdam to prove that particularism cannot have been its guiding inspiration. There was no idealism and little principle in the considerations that guided the regents of Amsterdam. More than any other town Amsterdam was interested in colonial enterprise, and colonial enterprise could flourish only at the expense of Spain, which had entered the field before the Dutch. Amsterdam's citizens high and low knew that a truce with Spain would arrest all conquest in the Indies, and especially in the West Indies. At this stage economic life was still marked by the harshness and recklessness it had acquired in the course of the sixteenth century. Colonial enterprise was hardly distinguishable from piracy. Yet, in these frenzied decades, the men of Amsterdam were unequalled in their ruthlessness and lust for wealth. Their fight for the inheritance of Antwerp's commercial leadership was not yet concluded. They wanted more war, to accumulate more spoils. Their regents ceased to care for the trade interests of their class. There is some idealism, after all, in the most thoroughgoing of class policies, because it has a care for the weal of neighbours and descendants. Amsterdam, however, was concerned with none but immediate gain. So when Oldenbarnevelt and the party of the States of Holland interrupted them in their conquest of the colonies of Spain and in their capture of the trade of Antwerp, the rulers of Amsterdam withdrew their support from him and from his masters.

Prince Maurice also felt thwarted. He and his noblemen officers had been made to halt in the flush of victory. Power, promotion and glory were torn away from them. Peace, moreover, removed much of the need for a central authority in the Republic, because it did not make the weaknesses of decentralisation so

<sup>1</sup> K 1540 of 1608.

immediately obvious. And, in diplomacy and in the other arts of peace-time politics, Maurice knew that Oldenbarnevelt was his master.

The struggle between the two religious factions brought Oldenbarnevelt's opponents together. The ministers who hated him and called him the friend of Spain shouted their execration when he and his regents endeavoured to prevent the persecution of the remonstrant heretics. The orthodox majority blindly followed its ministers. Prince Maurice, on the other hand, cared little for theological subtleties. A year before the signing of the truce, in 1608, he remarked that the quiet and idleness which would result from a suspension of hostilities were bound to feed religious dissension and lead to open quarrels. It has also been said that he did not even understand what the dispute between Arminius and Gomarus was about, and that he imagined for some time that it was the arminians who stood for the unpalatable doctrine of absolute predestination. In 1614, however, the counter-remonstrants were confidently asserting that the prince was on their side. In May 1617, at a meeting of the States of Holland, the prince permitted himself a remark which left little doubt that his sympathies were with the calvinist majority. Asked by Oldenbarnevelt to use his authority as chief of the country's armed forces and to check mob violence which was on the increase in many towns, he refused to give his assistance, saying that, as a matter of principle, he never meddled with ecclesiastical quarrels. Each party, he said, should be allowed to have its own churches. This sounded wise and tolerant, but in actual fact it meant giving a free hand to the intolerant majority, which did not dream of leaving the remonstrants free to worship in their own fashion, and would have no communion with them. The prince realised, of course, that the orthodox shared his hostility to the advocate, and that, when the time came to challenge the powers of the province of Holland, he would be able to count on their support. This is why he was beginning to take pains to make his preference noticeable. His refusal to intervene also implied the recognition of the schism in the Dutch reformed church, and the end of regent supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs. Finally, Maurice took a deliberate step which identified him publicly with the counter-remonstrant majority. When the counter-remonstrants of The Hague opened a church of their own he went to worship there with a large retinue.

Like calvinist democracy and like the prince of Orange, official Amsterdam adopted the counter-remonstrant creed. The ministers

and their flock were actuated by principle. The prince moved gradually and with a show of reluctance. He played the part of one who, though above petty ecclesiastical disputes, felt in duty bound to protect the freedom of the national church. The merchant princes of Amsterdam showed less delicacy. They saw in popular counter-remonstrantism a strong weapon with which to break the strong advocate,—and they seized the weapon. Among the regents of Amsterdam there were a few genuine remonstrants. Others were non-sectarian,—we might say liberals—and typical supporters of the class policy of the regents. As in other towns there was a small minority of counter-remonstrants. Most of the Amsterdam liberals, who were completely indifferent to the issues that divided the church, decided to give their support to the counter-remonstrants. A few of the remonstrant regents, like Oetgens, who at one time had been known as an ardent arminian, and Cromhout, changed their allegiance. In the course of 1610, the year after the signing of the truce with Spain, all the Amsterdam malcontents joined forces. The regents who continued to support Oldenbarnevelt were not re-elected to office by their colleagues in the *vroedschap* or “broad council”. Calvinist intolerance became the official policy of Amsterdam, and the purge was made more thorough at each subsequent election. By 1617, when the crisis had grown acute, Amsterdam was solid for the prince and the ministers. There was no love lost between the members of this heterogeneous coalition of town-politicians, held together by merchant greed and a common hatred. There were party bosses like Cromhout, who ruled with an iron hand, and used their position to accumulate wealth for themselves and their relatives. Readers of the autobiography of Lincoln Steffens will find a striking resemblance between the local politics of Amsterdam at the time of the truce with Spain and those of America as he describes them. Let it be added at once that this situation did not last. Before the end of the sixteen-twenties the rulers of Amsterdam had reverted to the long-term conception of regent interests, and returned to the States party with its many virtues and its many limitations. Meanwhile, however, their support was going to make it possible to break Oldenbarnevelt.

## CHAPTER X

## MAURICE THE CHESS-PLAYER

SO far, prince Maurice had been impressively cautious. He had seen to it that no one in the Republic could be in doubt about his counter-revolutionary sympathies. But he had not allowed himself to take a single step to convert sympathy into actual support. There was more in his restraint than native caution. At every step he knew precisely what he was doing. He was at war once more. The enemy was under the command of Oldenbarnevelt instead of Spinola. There was no other difference. Maurice's strategy was never adventurous. The only campaign in which he took unusual risks was that of 1600, which ended with the Battle of Nieuwpoort, and it had been planned by the civilians at home, not by him. Nor did he ever forgive them for compelling him to do violence to his nature on this occasion. This deeper nature of the prince did not obtrude itself. He was a well set up man, with a full face, a florid countenance, and a blond, flowing beard which made him look more like a prosperous brewer than a scheming politician. He was fond of life, loved a practical joke, and had a bevy of illegitimate children. But he was a chess-player,—a very keen chess-player. His strategy was that of a chess-player. And now he engaged upon the greatest game of his life, determined not to let it end in a draw. He allowed his opponent to take white, refused his gambit, and played for safety. When he was quite sure of himself, he pounced. As we shall see, the party of the States of Holland had the law on its side, the letter of the Union of Utrecht, but it was a law without a past behind it, recently made and based on a fanciful reading of medieval history. Maurice had on his side the monarchist instincts of the masses, and he manoeuvred till he also brought in on his side their democratic sentiment and their religious prejudices. The strength he drew from their support, to which was added the dynamic greed of Amsterdam, placed him above the law. This is why he could afford to wait for the challenge, which was bound to come unless his opponents abdicated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Groen van Prinsterer, the editor of the *Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, devotes the major part of the 160-page-long introduction to Vol. II of the Second Series to a defence of prince Maurice. To ward off the accusations against the prince's good faith Groen presents his hero as a spineless and indolent creature who was strongly under the influence of his cousin William Lewis of Nassau, stadtholder of Friesland. Groen's theory is that William Lewis, who was indeed an ardent calvinist, inspired Maurice with a burning zeal for the true religion, and suggested to him the means for assisting the



The party of the States still did not look upon him as an enemy. His father prince William had been their ally. Maurice himself owed his position to Oldenbarnevelt who secured his appointment in 1585. This ignorance about the prince's intentions gravely handicapped his adversaries. Much work was already going on behind the scenes. Maurice was establishing a precedent which his descendants and relatives were going to follow throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. • While he kept aloof from the struggle his personal supporters were at work, whether or not with his approval no one knew, intriguing and agitating for his appointment as count of Holland or even as lord of the United Provinces. This, in turn, had the result that members of the States party occasionally put their heads together and debated whether steps should not be taken to obtain a more precise definition of the prince's powers. The supporters of the prince now said—and wrote—that it was the States party which was preparing a coup d'Etat. The pamphleteers accused Oldenbarnevelt of being in the pay of Spain, and began to advocate a change in the personnel of the town administrations.<sup>1</sup>

The regents of the States of Holland began to see that their persons and their régime were in danger. It became obvious to them that the artificially fanned discontents might flare up at any moment, and that, if riots broke out with which the urban authorities were unable to cope, their enemies would triumphantly proclaim that the time had arrived for appointing magistrates who had authority and were able to preserve law and order. It was necessary therefore that the magistrates should have at their disposal armed forces on which they could implicitly rely. But where could they be found? The regular army would certainly not help them if the calvinist community rose against them. Prince Maurice had made this abundantly clear. He was known to have said that he would on no account do anything against "those of the true reformed religion". The urban militias, the home-guard of the Dutch Republic, were disaffected. Though officered by relatives and friends of the regents, their rank and file belonged to the lower

orthodox in overcoming their enemies. There is no doubt that William Lewis did advise Maurice. The princes of Orange were never without their circle of advisers drawn from the nobility. But there is no serious evidence to support the view that prince Maurice was driven to action by religious sympathies, and that his slowness to act was due to reluctance and not to prudent calculation.

<sup>1</sup> There was a real battle of pamphlets between Aerssen van Sommelsdijk, one of the prince's closest supporters, and Van der Mijlen, Oldenbarnevelt's son-in-law (e.g. K 2580).

middle class and to the middling classes, the bulk of whom supported the counter-remonstrants.<sup>1</sup> Short of giving up the fight for toleration and for the political dictatorship of the upper middle class, the Holland regents had no alternative but to raise their own troops.

Local levies of professional soldiers—called *waardgelders*—had been made more than once in times of emergency. In August 1617, as we have seen, the States of Holland decided to take drastic action. They passed a resolution empowering all town administrations to raise *waardgelders* for service within their own territory. These troops were to take an oath of allegiance to the town administration which employed them. At the same time the States of Holland decided to oppose the meeting of a national synod of the calvinist church, on the ground that such a synod would define certain doctrinal points on which individuals had so far been allowed to decide for themselves, with the consequence that the field of toleration would be further restricted.<sup>2</sup> This resolution became known as the "Sharp Resolution". The delegates of Amsterdam and of five other Holland towns which accepted the leadership of Amsterdam voted against this measure, which reaffirmed the doctrine of provincial sovereignty and proclaimed Holland's intention of upholding it regardless of consequences.

The States of Holland, or rather the majority in the States which supported the policy of Oldenbarnevelt, stood almost alone in the Republic. In some of the provinces they could count upon the support of the urban regents, numerically a small minority everywhere, while calvinist orthodoxy, democratic orangism, and jealousy of the power of Holland guaranteed strong support for anything that might be undertaken to break the hegemony of the proud regents of the States of Holland. The town of Utrecht, where social conditions were similar to those that prevailed in the towns of the province of Holland, and where remonstrantism was strong, was the strongest buttress of Holland's ascendancy. A deputation from the States of Holland succeeded in persuading its regents to adopt the policy of the "Sharp Resolution" and to begin recruiting urban levies. Meanwhile there was some uncertainty in Holland itself. The Amsterdam group naturally refrained from raising troops. Some of the majority towns began to take action, while others hesitated. They realised that the prince would take offence, because military matters were his own special province, and because the measure was directed against those whom he openly called his

<sup>1</sup> For the frame of mind of the urban militias (*schutterijen*) see K 2579, 2580.

<sup>2</sup> See pamphlet K 2714.

friends. This fear of the prince's displeasure was a major factor in the situation. It showed that elements other than the lawful resolutions of the States of Holland might at any moment be thrown into the scale.

The challenge for which prince Maurice, knowing that it was bound to come sooner or later, had been waiting patiently, had been issued at last, however reluctantly. Driven into a corner, the party of the States of Holland and their leader Oldenbarnevelt had ventured to act. There can be no doubt whatever that their action was strictly within the letter of the law, for the province of Holland was a sovereign state. But, as we know, the letter of the law was only one of the elements of the Dutch constitution. The undefined position of the prince, his semi-sovereignty rooted in sentiment, and the Generality which was to all but the regent theorists something more than the sum total of power delegated by the provinces,—these were equally valid, and strongly sinned against by the "Sharp Resolution" of August. By demanding from their soldiers a private oath of loyalty, by retaining troops that were not placed at the disposal of the Generality, the States of Holland were infringing the rights, legitimate though not legal, of the captain-general and of the Union. The enemies of the Holland regents were, in their turn, bound to act or to admit defeat.

Suddenly prince Maurice perceived the opportunity for a strictly legal move, devoid of any risks and yet decisive, because it demonstrated the extent of his moral authority and the weakness of the legalistic thesis. In the south-west corner of the province of Holland, isolated in the small island of Voorne, lay the little town of Den Briel. Its people traded in grain, sailed out to catch herring, and extracted scarlet dye from the madder. Den Briel was the first town to join the revolt against Alva when it fell to the Sea-Beggars in 1572. Now it was left with only the shadow of its former, though never considerable, greatness. There remained something cosmopolitan about its population. Not many years had gone by since it had an English garrison which worshipped in its own church. This church was now occupied by the Walloon community which held services in French. There were Lutherans too, and the proportion of remonstrants was considerable. Nevertheless the counter-remonstrants tried to apply their usual methods of intolerance and exclusion, while the magistrates did their best to protect the threatened remonstrants. They began seriously to consider the advisability of appointing troops in accordance with the "Sharp Resolution". But on September 29th the prince transferred two companies of

regular soldiers to Den Briel, which he was fully entitled to do as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He was equally entitled to pay a visit to the town, and there was no one to prevent his arrival from coinciding with that of the troops. The magistrates received him with all the honours due to his rank, but asked him whether the soldiers could not be transferred elsewhere or at least be made to undertake that they would protect the town authorities. The prince answered that he did not see his way to act in accordance with either of these proposals. Using his undeniable right to express a private opinion, he added: "I understand that there is some talk of recruiting special levies, which I hold to be unseemly". Den Briel recruited no levies, and its counter-remonstrants henceforth worshipped in public in their own manner and interfered with their opponents unmolested. The captain-general made a legitimate move, the prince expressed a private opinion,—a minor town made its submission, and the larger ones knew what was in store for them.

The pamphleteers at once proclaimed that the prince's timely action had saved the country. He had discovered that Oldenbarnevelt was on the point of delivering Den Briel to the Spaniards. The prince said nothing. Nor did he give the lie to the slanderers. The pamphlet campaign was too useful to be discouraged.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the experiment of Den Briel had proved so successful that the prince decided to repeat it. When they met as deputies from their towns for the periodical sessions of the sovereign States of Holland, or in the permanent working committee of these States, the regents felt very powerful indeed, and knew themselves to be the employers and the masters of the prince. But if he called on them in their own town, invested with those semi-mystical attributes of his semi-sovereignty,—his right of reprieve, his right to make his own selections among the candidates for office listed by their fellow-members of the *vroedschap*,—he appeared more as a master than a servant. The mastery became more tangible still when, as captain-general, he appeared at the head of his troops. The prince had a body-guard. He increased its numbers. And now he began to travel, and in the first place in the provinces of Gelderland and Overysel, where his position was stronger than in Holland. In one town after

<sup>1</sup> The pamphleteers did not content themselves with attacking the legality of the appointment of *waardgelders* and with questioning the motives of this measure. They also waged a regular campaign against these levies, and accused them of being undisciplined, cruel and riotous. They called them "a random collection of rabble" (K 2571, 2579). They argued that the Sharp Resolution was "directed against the authority of the prince". Petitions were sent to the prince, for instance by a large group of Leyden militiamen, asking him to take steps against the *waardgelders* (see K 2580).

another he dismissed the regents who were not in favour of the counter-remonstrants, and appointed others in their place.

There could no longer be any doubt now about the prince's plan of action. What he had done in the tamer provinces of Gelderland and Overysel he would next do in Utrecht, and finally in Holland itself. The regents of Utrecht and of Holland were to be made as tame as those of the other provinces. Threats would not have fitted into the plan. They were not needed. The pamphleteers threatened in the name of the prince, they put their threats into his mouth, and, as usual, the prince did not disavow them. A pamphlet reported that Maurice had said: "I shall grind the advocate and his friends as fine as dust"; another said that he had described the recruitment of urban levies as an act of rebellion. Meanwhile the majority in the States General were trying to persuade the regents of Utrecht and those of Holland to dismiss their urban levies. Their representations were not without effect. The regents of the States party were conscious of their isolation. By the middle of 1613 they had begun seriously to consider whether the wisest course was not to give way. In July the States of Holland assured the States General that they were ready to disband the urban levies, provided an assurance were given to them and to the States of Utrecht that they would be protected against any form of violence, including what might be attempted under the banner of religion. But the prince and his supporters wanted unconditional submission.

Towards the end of July, meetings and conferences were held at Utrecht, at which the party of Oldenbarnevelt fought its last defensive action. The States of Holland sent a delegation to the States of Utrecht, but so did the States General. Then the prince appeared in person, conscious of all the advantages of his position. The delegation from Holland defended once more the strict legality of the action taken by its principals, but the prince told them that Oldenbarnevelt wanted to substitute the authority of Holland for that of the States General. In speaking to these defenders of the legal conception of provincial sovereignty the prince carefully avoided denying the legality of their principle. But he made it appear that they themselves were offending against it by trying to usurp the sovereignty of the six allied provinces for the benefit of the province of Holland. This was the subtlest of all the prince's moves. The Generality, the idea of centralisation, of which the prince himself was the symbol, no longer appeared as the competitor of legitimate provincial sovereignty so dear to the regents of Holland. The Generality had become the protector of this sovereignty

throughout the territory of the Republic. Five of the provinces, said the prince, were on his side, and six of the towns of Holland. It was time, therefore, that Holland gave way. It should also cease to prevent the holding of a national synod. Perhaps the most striking aspect of these Utrecht conferences was the respectful tone in which the regents of the Holland deputation, as well as the other regents, addressed the prince. One of the delegates was Grotius, the theorist of provincial sovereignty. Like all his colleagues, he addressed the prince as one addresses a sovereign. In the presence of the hallowed personality the regents became aware of the fact that they were dealing with something that transcended established legality. The prince had brought to bear his strongest asset. He knew that he was winning.

Events were beginning to move with increasing rapidity. The delegation from Holland returned to The Hague, the prince dismissed from the administration of the town of Utrecht those who were not for the counter-remonstrants. His opponents in Holland realised that they were beaten. The first to admit defeat were the regents of Rotterdam, who disbanded their urban levies. Now the States General stepped in. By a majority of six to one they issued, on August 21st, 1618, a decree ordering all towns to disband their levies.<sup>1</sup> The delegation of Holland had not given its consent, and the decree had therefore no legal value, since no sovereign province could be coerced by the States General. Nevertheless the decree was obeyed by every single Holland town which had applied the "Sharp Resolution". Holland, meanwhile, was making a last stand against the convening of the national synod which, it knew, would sanction the expulsion of the remonstrants from the church. The States of Holland pointed out that the States General could not, without their authorisation, order that the synod should meet in one of their towns. Dordrecht had already been selected as the meeting place by the calvinist majority. But with the disbandment of their own armed forces the regents of Holland saw that resistance also on this point was doomed to failure. They therefore consented to the holding of the synod, but stipulated that its decisions should not be valid in Holland unless ratified by its provincial States. It is hardly necessary at this juncture to point out that it would have required very little pressure to make Holland give up even this last show of independence. But the prince was not really interested in the minor aspects of the religious quarrel. He wanted, as we have seen, to break his chief opponent Oldenbarnevelt, and he wanted,

<sup>1</sup> See K. 2682.

still more, to establish a new legality. His recent tribute to the principle of provincial sovereignty had been a last concession to prudence. Henceforth he knew that the road was clear.

More and more the orangist pamphleteers concentrated their attacks upon the grand pensionary. The hour of vengeance was at hand, and the moment had arrived for the culmination of one of the most skilfully organised publicity campaigns of history. A *Warning to all the good Inhabitants of these Netherlands, to be read by Everyone and to be impressed upon the Innermost of his Heart* was issued and reprinted several times in the year 1678. "Here is a man", said the anonymous author, "who is notoriously responsible for the confusion from which we are suffering, and who still continues to feed it. He, who rose from nothing, imagines that he cannot rise high enough to his taste unless he loosens the ties of our state, such as true religion, the administration of justice and the regimen of our soldiers. . . . In violation of his oath, he has revealed the resources, the income and the secrets of the country. . . . But the Dutch are a free people. They have endured great pains in fighting the tyranny of a powerful king, they have borne heavy burdens and suffered long wars. They are not used to bend their necks under the unbearable yoke of those who hold authority through illegal usurpation".<sup>1</sup>

A perfect summary of the orangist case was presented by another anonymous writer, who published a *Further Revelation of a highly important Matter concerning the Prosperity of our distressed Country*. He began with the praise of "prince William of Orange and his son, the great Maurice, now our ruling lord—*nu regerende Heer*". Prince William was a second Moses, Maurice a second Joshua. But now a truce had been concluded, and the man who introduced the Trojan horse into the city was a second Sino. "This envious man wants to prevent our prince from giving us complete victory, wherefore his name and memory will be accursed to all godfearing people, and held up to the horror of ourselves and the children of our children. God must avenge this deceit and faithlessness on him and on his kin". The worthy prince, said the writer, was the chosen instrument of his people's liberation. But those who hated him bitterly were trying to make him suspect by alleging that he aimed at usurping the country's sovereignty. There was one man in particular, the man who had brought about the disastrous truce, who passed from one evil deed to another. He had filled the country with division, schism and confusion. The harm he had wrought to its religious, political and military interests was untold. This godless disciple

<sup>1</sup> K 2637.

of Machiavelli disguised his extravagant ambition under an appearance of piety and morality. He made himself the head and protector of the arminian sect, which was nothing but pelagianism in disguise. He gave his support to all atheists, epicureans, unbelievers and papists, and to all innovators and rebels who were hostile to the reformed religion and to the state. "He and his friends"—to the end the pamphleteer was careful to mention no names—"have sought, in their desire to establish a tyranny for their own benefit, to appoint in every province as many magistrates, pensionaries, governors and officers as possible from among their own creatures. The more incompetent, indiscreet and reckless he finds them, the readier they will be to let him use them for his evil purposes." Now this man and his supporters, said the writer, had the hardihood to accuse the orthodox protestants of being the cause of all the country's troubles. They were like the wolf in *Æsop's* fable, which accused the lamb that stood below it of polluting the water. "But why", asked the writer, "should we keep this old gentleman waiting so long? Why not make him count of Holland, since he has usurped all the powers of a count? Hail to you, count John of Holland!" There followed a list of proofs of Oldenbarnevelt's intention to rid himself of his competitor Maurice. The conclusion was that Oldenbarnevelt's "pernicious conspiracy" must be stamped out, that the country must rid itself of a pest which would otherwise destroy it and that the sooner this was done the better it would be for all concerned. It was to be hoped, therefore, that the Dutch people would no longer wait before showing "this foolish usurper" that they were not prepared to be robbed of their freedom by him. "Let us take an example", was the ominous conclusion, "from the excellent and salutary determination of king Louis XIII of France, whose rapid decision to rid himself of the *maréchal d'Ancre* saved his crown when it was almost lost. . . . Has the time not come—or are we so lacking in courage?—for us to take some kind of decision against this counterfeit count, who, if things were as they ought to be, would still be our servant? Should we not, without lengthy and costly ceremonial, do that which will make him repent his excessive folly?"<sup>1</sup>

The "Sharp Resolution" belonged to the past. The towns of Holland had made their submission. The magistrates who championed toleration had been deprived of the means to enforce it, and the open season for the baiting of dissenters was about to provide the heresy hunters with full scope for putting their doctrines into

<sup>1</sup> K 2650.



practice. Yet the wolves continued to howl. They wanted the head of the grand pensionary. Oldenbarnevelt's friends warned him of his danger. The old man had no illusions; he knew that his enemies were implacable, that they were strong, and that he was at their mercy. But he did not waver. It is certain that had he chosen voluntary exile no obstacle would have been placed in his way. But flight would have been interpreted as an admission, not of the strength of his opponents, but of their good right. And this he was determined to prevent at all cost. Convinced that the law was on his side, he decided to remain at The Hague. With one exception, he saw the coming moves as clearly as the prince saw them himself. The exception was this: he failed to realise that the prince was prepared to carry the affair through to its ultimate consequence, and to take his life, if there were no other way to prove the superior rights of the Generality. The prince, on the other hand, wanted it established, publicly, once and for all, that those who served provincial sovereignty to the detriment of the Generality did so at their own peril.

The arrest took place on August 29th, 1618. It was carried out by a lieutenant of the prince's bodyguard, acting "by order of the States General". A few other leaders of the States party, and among them Grotius, were arrested soon after Oldenbarnevelt. The States of Holland immediately protested and asked that the arrested men, who were subjects of Holland, should be handed over to them in accordance with the law. Amsterdam and the other minority towns disagreed as usual. The prince declined all responsibility and said that the issue was between Holland and the States General. On the day of the arrest a publication, printed by the official printer of the States General, was issued and circulated, alleging that Oldenbarnevelt and his fellow-prisoners were guilty of plotting against the security of the state. The counter-remonstrant and orangist pamphleteers at once seized upon this accusation and said that the crime they had committed was treasonable commerce with Spain. Circumstantial details were given, and although neither the crime of treason nor the details provided in pamphlets and broadsheets were mentioned in the act of accusation which was drawn up at a later stage, they were never denied by the prince or by those responsible for the trial of the prisoners. Oldenbarnevelt and his colleagues were questioned, and one of them committed suicide after being threatened with torture.

While these illegal proceedings were taking their course, the prince undertook a new journey, this time through the province of

Holland. With his usual caution he began by visiting the towns which had a garrison. There, as he had done before in Gelderland, Overysel and Utrecht, he dismissed the regents who belonged to the defeated party and appointed in their place convinced adherents of the counter-remonstrant majority. He followed up this tour with a series of visits to the ungarrisoned towns, accompanied by his body-guard of 300, and was successful everywhere. The only place where the course of the purge ran less smoothly was Hoorn. The story of the change of magistrates at Hoorn deserves to be told: it reveals some characteristic features of the struggle. Hoorn was a minor town with a population of rather under 15,000, but it was prosperous, proud and liberal. It possessed important shipbuilding wharves, and its ships carried a substantial portion of the East India trade. Its cheese market was one of the most important of the country. Its public library boasted the possession of one of the earliest Dutch *incunabula*. There were many catholics at Hoorn, and the number of its remonstrants was considerable. The magistrates were remonstrant to a man. Though their town was situated in the midst of Amsterdam's satellites they were determined supporters of the policy of the States of Holland. Their attitude was probably not entirely unconnected with trade jealousy towards the larger town, to which much of Hoorn's business was being diverted. Moreover, some of the magistrates had family connections with Oldenbarnevelt. In the spring prince Maurice had sent a garrison to Hoorn, but the magistrates closed the gates and refused to admit it. The time had not yet come, then, for the prince to assert himself; rather than admit a check by giving it publicity he allowed the affront to pass in silence. Now, having changed the magistrates in all the garrisoned towns and in several others, he decided to take strong action at Hoorn. When, early in September 1618, the magistrates heard that the prince was on his way to their town, they sent messengers to him with the request not to bring a large retinue. He openly took offence at this request, and answered "that he was prepared to take another way if the people of Hoorn did not wish to have him in their town. But in that case he would have to consider what his subsequent line of conduct would be. As for his retinue, he was not prepared to diminish it by as much as one single page". To prolong the uncertainty of the magistrates of Hoorn and to prevent their reaching a decision before he faced them, he kept the messengers with him. Only when he arrived outside the town, the gates of which had been closed, did he allow them to proceed. They found the magistrates drawn up in a body on the jetty outside

the walls, and told them what had passed between them and the prince. No time was wasted in idle words: the gates were opened at once. Everything passed off with the utmost decorum. The citizens' militia happened, most conveniently, to be at hand. In the twinkling of an eye it was disposed in a double row between the gates and the inn where the prince was to lie that night. The prince, his retinue, and his life-guard, marched in procession between the burgomasters-in-arms. The life-guard was lodged in a wooden shed outside the prince's inn. A banquet was offered to the prince and his noblemen, and there was a great show of mutual cordiality. Meanwhile, acting upon the orders of the town regents, two companies of the militia occupied the town hall, the weigh-house and the gates. When they heard of this, the noblemen felt somewhat uncomfortable. They were also informed that a considerable number of militiamen were spoiling for a fight with the prince's musketeers. It was known, on the other hand, that some of the people of Hoorn were equally keen to fight for the prince. Maurice kept his counsel, and all settled down for a night's rest.

The next morning the prince was up and about at an early hour. He summoned the officers of the militia, and said: "Why are you so watchful? Surely, I have given you no reason to distrust me?" They replied that they were acting by order of the burgomasters. The burgomasters were called in, and explained that they were merely carrying out the instructions of the council. Meanwhile the council arrived in a body to see the prince. They asked that he should make no change in the composition of the magistracy, because this would be an infringement of their privileges, which it was their duty to uphold. They pointed out that such a change would displease the population and cause unrest. If there were any complaint against some particular person, said the magistrates in the most deferentially impersonal manner, let him be indicted and his defence heard. Those who were found guilty could then be removed from office by the prince, or otherwise punished. They were prepared as a body to deny on oath the allegation that they had schemed against His Serenity—Richelieu had not yet bestowed upon the princes of Orange the title of Highness—or that they had attempted anything to diminish his authority. If, they added, he should wish to introduce changes, they begged him to adopt the method of increasing the number of magistrates by appointing some persons of his own choice. The prince appeared to receive this suggestion with favour, but he asked with great insistence that the militia should be sent home. The magistrates gave the necessary

orders, and repeated their request. The prince said he would take the matter into consideration, and thereupon put an end to the audience. Nothing else took place on this day or the next, except that a number of ships carrying several companies of regular soldiers arrived in the harbour from Friesland and elsewhere.

On October 5th the prince, who had obviously been waiting for these reinforcements, summoned the magistrates to the town hall. Surrounded by his noblemen he entered the council chamber, while hundreds of troops were drawn up in half-moon formation on the triangular market place facing the town hall. He delivered a brief address to the magistrates, thanked them for the services they had rendered, and announced that they were all dismissed from office. When they had gone their several ways he sent for eight of them and reappointed them together with twelve new men. He also appointed new burgomasters—there were four of them at Hoorn. In the afternoon he dismissed a number of militia officers. Hoorn was purged, and loyal to the stadtholder. The new magistrates closed the remonstrant church, and its minister Sapma, whose encounter with the Amsterdam magistrates a few years later has been related earlier on, went into exile.

The story of the prince's bloodless triumph contains one further episode which is more significant than appears at first sight. In some Dutch towns those members of the broad council or *Vroedschap* who were chosen for a year's service on the active council—the actual town government—also filled the minor offices of *schepenen* or aldermen, of guardians of the orphans, and others. The prince refused to dismiss any of the occupants of these offices, even if they were among those whom he had just removed from higher office or from the council. "What is to happen to them?" he was asked by an official. "There has been enough change as it is—too much even", replied the prince. One should not ascribe this leniency to a sudden access of human sympathy. The chess-player was not subject to impulses. He had taken his opponents' piece, which was enough. He was not the enemy of the regents as a class. As long as they were politically subservient—or even merely accommodating—he had no quarrel with them. On the contrary, he was their closest ally. He approved of the social dictatorship of the upper middle class, and was its staunchest supporter. So were all his successors. And this, indeed, is the key to the greater part of the subsequent history of the Dutch Republic.

While the prince was still touring the towns of Holland and changing the composition of their administrations, the States of

Holland were being brought to heel by an automatic process. One of the first acts of every regenerated town council was to recall its delegation from The Hague and to appoint deputies who were in harmony with the new dispensation. When he knew that the States were sufficiently tame and counter-remonstrant, the prince paid a visit to The Hague and appeared before them. He delivered a speech in which he informed them that, for the restoration of peace and unity in the country, he had, reluctantly,—and not without labour or peril,—been compelled to visit a certain number of towns in the province, and to dismiss and replace some of their burgomasters, magistrates and councillors. It should be understood, however, the prince added, that this had taken place without there being any curtailment or alteration of the rights and privileges of the said towns. To attribute this reservation to fear, or to say that the prince was paying lip-service to a principle which he could afford to disregard in practice, is to misunderstand his policy. He was strong enough, thanks to the support of the calvinist masses, to ignore any law, and the sovereign rights that went with the title of count were his for the asking. But the prince had no wish to be the ruler of a democracy. In announcing his intention to uphold the privileges of the towns he proclaimed the legal recognition of the unalterable dictatorship of the upper middle class, since he knew that the rights and privileges of the towns were synonymous with the rights and privileges of their regents. The States of Holland thanked the prince and expressed the view that, both in what he had done and in what he had still to do, he had no other object than the service and the pacification of the country. A little later, when the purge of the town administrations was complete, the States of Holland expressed their solemn thanks to the prince and ratified his actions.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile another part of the prince's programme was being carried out in his absence. The prisoners of state were kept in strict isolation. Attempts were made to extract confessions from them by stories of alleged admissions by their companions in misfortune. What passed at these interrogations mattered little. The triumphant party was determined to secure a conviction, knew it could carry this through and did not care on what grounds the conviction was based. Anyhow, the process was being pre-judged by the pamphleteers, by the slanderers and by the credulous masses, who listened open-mouthed while the itinerant ballad makers poured indecorous abuse upon the grand pensionary at every market

<sup>1</sup> See K 6486 of 1649.

and six in the country.<sup>1</sup> In January 1619 it was felt by those in power that enough time had been spent on preliminary investigations, and that the next step could now be taken without apparent unseemliness. Who was to appoint the judges? The Generality, obviously, since the prisoners were accused of new crimes that could hardly be brought home to them under the system of provincial sovereignty. Nevertheless, it was decided to ask each province to make its own appointments. • But,—and this is another significant symptom of the superficial character of the revolution that had taken place,—the States of Holland insisted on two things. Their province must appoint as many judges as the other six provinces together, and it was to be understood that the surrender of these prisoners to the Generality was not to create a precedent. Holland reserved its right to administer justice to all its own citizens, and continued as before to claim a position of primacy in the federation.

In March the judges summoned the prisoners before them, and questioned them separately. “Was it not a fact that the advocate had told him that the prince aimed at obtaining the sovereignty for himself, and that this ought to be prevented?” This was one of the questions put to Grotius. Surely a conversation on matters of business between two high officials could be looked upon as incriminating only if the very legality upon which their office was based were denied? The question was typical of the many that were asked. It was already taken for granted that the prince was above the law and that to question any of his motives, or to contemplate the possibility of interfering with any of his actions, was in itself a transgression. When Oldenbarnevelt’s turn came he began with a lawyer’s speech in which he impugned the competence and legality of the tribunal. The questions he was asked did little but reproduce the tittle-tattle of the pamphleteers. In April, while still denying the legality of the proceedings, he made a long speech in his own defence. Early in May, though no conclusion had been reached, the judges considered that the time had come for drawing up their verdict.

As the sham proceedings were approaching their term, pressure was brought to bear upon prince Maurice by some of the more enlightened members of his entourage to make him intervene in

<sup>1</sup> See *Vrijmoedich Onderzoek van verscheyden Placcaten in de Gheunieerde Provinciën binnen twee iaeren herwaerts gepubliceert*, 1620, no place of publication (K 3100). This anonymous pamphlet of about 200 pages gives the whole story of the treatment of Oldenbarnevelt and Hogherbeets, and describes the propaganda campaign of which they were the victims. It is an exceptionally able piece of writing which demolishes the whole edifice of juridical make-belief built up by the authors of the coup d’Etat of 1618.

favour of the advocate. The prince said that he was willing to exercise his right of reprieve, provided a reprieve was asked for by Oldenbarnevelt's friends. The friends and relatives were informed of this, but they refused, and thereby showed that they understood the situation and knew the old man's mind. On the evening of May 12th, 1619, two officers of the court entered Oldenbarnevelt's prison and informed him that on the following morning he would hear his death sentence. "The death sentence! The death sentence!" he exclaimed. "That I did not expect. I thought I would have been questioned again." Later he was heard to say: "If only I knew why I have to die!" Presently Walaeus, a distinguished divine, arrived to administer spiritual consolations to the condemned statesman. Now Walaeus was prince Maurice's man. A staunch counter-remonstrant, he was yet sufficiently human to incur the ill-will of the ever quarrelsome Gomarus who suspected his orthodoxy. Earlier in the year the prince, whose choice of religious allegiance had been attended by singularly little theology, felt a desire to obtain expert guidance on a matter in which his words were beginning to count as weighty pronouncements. He therefore summoned Walaeus from his pastoral activities at Middelburg and made him his adviser in matters of divinity.

It was the prince himself who instructed Walaeus to visit Oldenbarnevelt. The two men talked earnestly and at length about religion and the future life. Walaeus was not unpopular with the minority party, and, although Oldenbarnevelt's politics had made him the protector of the remonstrants, his own views, as Walaeus discovered, were indistinguishable from those of the orthodox. At last the prisoner put an end to the conversation. He asked his visitor to give two messages to prince Maurice. The first was to commend the interests of his children to the prince's care; the second was to say that if he had ever wronged the prince in any way, he wished to be forgiven.—Did this mean, enquired Walaeus, that Oldenbarnevelt was asking for a reprieve?—"No", was the reply, "my request does not go as far as that." A man *in articulo mortis* was making his peace with the world—that was all.

## CHAPTER XI

## A DRAWN GAME

THE background was sordid: the advocate's enemies held him at bay, the hard-faced merchants of Amsterdam, the hair-splitters, and the fanatics were out for his blood,—an unclean miscarriage of justice was taking its course. But, towering above the pettiness of the hour, stood the two great leaders, about whom nothing was sordid. And, because of these protagonists, the action was raised to the eternal level of tragedy. An old man who loved life as only the old, who know it, can love it, accepted death. A younger man who was loath to kill him allowed him to die. Maurice had reached the final move in the stupendous game. A capital verdict was essential to establish once and for all the existence in the Republic of an authority higher than that of the individual provinces. Maurice did not want blood. He wanted to break his opponents, and this was precisely what Oldenbarnevelt would not let him do. For an hour or so the old man had been overwhelmed by the sudden imminence of death. But as soon as he had recovered his composure he knew what remained to be done. His spontaneous message to the prince shows that he felt no personal animosity. But with the enemy of provincial sovereignty and of the hegemony of the province of Holland, no compromise was possible. Oldenbarnevelt had failed to win the game, others would set up the pieces once more. He must not spoil their chances by a submission that could not fail to be interpreted as a confession of guilt. His death would turn the prince's apparent check-mate into a draw. Against judicial murder there was an appeal from beyond the grave.

It was ten at night when Walaëus left the prison. He went straight to the stadtholder who was waiting for him. The prince was deeply moved. Tears came into his eyes while he told Walaëus that he was sorry for the advocate, but that he had no doubt about the prisoner's guilt. He listened attentively while the minister repeated Oldenbarnevelt's messages. Then he asked one question: "Does he not mention a reprieve?" To which Walaëus replied: "I have, in truth, not understood him to do so".

The night was spent by Oldenbarnevelt in prayer and pious meditation. At five in the morning of May 13th he was summoned before his judges, and listened to their lengthy verdict. He was charged with many crimes. It was alleged that he had pressed



every province to claim for itself the right to legislate in ecclesiastical matters, that he had promoted unorthodox religious doctrines, that he had been instrumental in promulgating severe edicts against those who professed the true christian faith, that he had initiated the passing of the "Sharp Resolution" of August 1617, that he had accepted presents from foreign powers without informing his principals. There were many other counts in the verdict which was the first proper indictment Oldenbarnevelt had heard. He protested that the charges went far beyond the admissions he had made in the course of his interrogations. But as he spoke he was rudely interrupted by one of the judges, who shouted: "Your sentence has been read out to you. Move on! Move on!" Leaning heavily upon his stick, the old man of seventy-one left the room, and limped to the scaffold which was erected on the same level in the open. His servant, who had shared his captivity, helped him to remove his cloak and jacket. To the crowd that pressed around he said: "Men, I have behaved as an upright and God-fearing patriot, and that is how I shall die". Then he knelt on the cushionless boards.<sup>1</sup>

The States General sent a number of printed copies of the sentence to the States of every province, accompanied by a letter in which they said: "Apart from the contents of the sentence, the judges have also informed us that several other matters have been charged against the accused, of which no mention is made in his sentence. According to information received and conclusions drawn therefrom, a great suspicion has been aroused that he must have looked towards the enemy and regulated his actions in consequence, so as to give no offence to the other side, but, on the contrary, to favour it. But after it was made out from the confessions concerning these points, that they were not such that they could be disposed of definitely according to law, without further enquiries and sharper examination"—a euphemism for torture—"and that this was not deemed advisable by the judges in view of his great age and of other considerations concerning the service of the country, and most particularly because the decision of this and of other business could no longer be delayed without prejudice to the common cause; and as, moreover, the matters related in the sentence were sufficient to warrant exemplary punishment against his

<sup>1</sup> The sentence was immediately printed as a pamphlet (K 2884) by Hillebrant Jacobsz., the ordinary printer of the States General. This sentence and those passed on Grotius and Oldenbarnevelt's other fellow-prisoner, the pensionary of Leyden (K 2915 and 2920), provide an excellent outline of the policy, the purposes and the doctrines of the enemies of the Holland States party.

person; therefore we have found good and approved that Your Honours be acquainted with these matters". The letter was immediately published by the printer of the States General.<sup>1</sup>

The other prisoners were condemned to life-long imprisonment and to the confiscation of their property. The story of Grotius's escape in a book-chest, a few years later, is known to everyone. Full rehabilitation has long since come to Oldenbarnevelt. Posterity honours him as one of the founders of the Dutch State, and therefore of the Dutch nation. No one denies that his execution was a judicial murder.

While the trial was proceeding on its unhurried way the national synod met at Dordrecht. It expelled the remonstrants from the church and gave complete satisfaction to those who wished the Dutch reformed church to glory in the possession of dogmas as rigidly defined as those of Rome. For some years, the remonstrants continued to be persecuted. The preaching of remonstrant doctrines was forbidden under penalty of life-long imprisonment. A large proportion of the 300 ministers who were adherents of the forbidden doctrines went into exile, many others were incarcerated. A remonstrant fraternity was established as early as 1619. It was in fact a secret church which gave itself an organisation similar to that of the Dutch reformed church. The main point in the remonstrant confession of faith was the recognition of the bible as the sole repository of protestant doctrine, while human beings were left free to judge for themselves the value of formulas, confessions and catechisms. As a result of this freedom, the divergence between orthodox and remonstrant doctrines grew much greater than the subtle distinctions made by Arminius and Gomarus. The form of arminianism known in seventeenth-century England, with its episcopalian ritualism, never found favour in the Dutch Republic. Even when, after the death of Maurice in 1625, the remonstrants slowly won toleration, they continued to be a somewhat select and self-contained community. Its members were not eligible for public office, and throughout the century it never counted above 12,000 communicants.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as a result of the quarrels that broke out during the Twelve Years' Truce with Spain, the Dutch Republic became divided into two parties. But these parties were not the counter-remonstrants and the remonstrants. The religious split merely

<sup>1</sup> K 2925.

<sup>2</sup> For the later history of arminianism, see pamphlets K 3811, 3815, 3832, 3834, 4172. The tolerance prevailing towards the end of the war with Spain is described in K 5291.

brought about a crystallisation of political affinities. It is true that the majority party comprised all the counter-remonstrants. The calvinist population, led by its ministers, formed the bulk of this party. With it were those who, like the prince with his personal supporters as well as the regents of Amsterdam, had embraced the counter-remonstrant cause for opportunist reasons. All these elements together formed the orangist party, though, as we shall see, they were the party that supported the princes of Orange rather than the party which enjoyed the support of the princes. They were, up to a point,—but up to a point only,—the party of the Generality, the party of centralisation. They were also the party of democracy, which is no doubt the reason that prevented the princes, who were never democrats, from being with them heart and soul. The defeated party, the States party or party of the States of Holland, consisted of liberals who wished to tolerate and protect the remonstrants, who believed in the subordination of the church to the state, in the strict application of the Union of Utrecht, in provincial sovereignty and in decentralisation. In other words, the States party wanted to restore, to strengthen and to perpetuate the political dictatorship of the upper middle class as the safest guarantee of the social and economic dictatorship of this class.<sup>1</sup>

In the Dutch Republic no situation was ever clear-cut, no tendency straight, no party single-minded. Of the two parties the States party appeared, on the whole, the more homogeneous. It was never tempted to look upon the state as the supreme good. Material prosperity was its leading preoccupation, and the subordination of all other classes to its paternal rule was the way in which it applied its conception of enlightened self-interest. Peace was its dearest wish, and this, as well as the desire not to strengthen the position of the princes of Orange and their military henchmen, made it frown upon armaments. Its foreign policy tended to remain empirical, but it was usually ready to resort to force for the protection of trade interests. This is why it was usually less averse to the strengthening of the country's naval resources. The orangist party, on the other hand, suffered from a perennial duality. Its supporters inherited the democratic traditions of the early reformation. But the princes and the noblemen about them had adopted

<sup>1</sup> Provincial sovereignty was not an end in itself in regent policy. It was merely a means for making the upper middle class dictatorship secure, and the regents were ready to jettison it whenever it endangered this dictatorship. When there was a democratic rising at Utrecht in 1610, the States General did not hesitate to interfere in the defence of regent supremacy, and the province of Holland approved. See the message of the States General to the provinces, justifying their intervention (K 1722 of 1610).

something of the modernising tendencies of Philip II of Spain. As far as their position allowed, they served the reason of state. They were militarists, but not tyrants. They were no demagogues either, except at moments of crisis, when they used their democratic leadership ruthlessly. Normally, they were hand in glove with the regents, and it is for this reason that they failed to carry out the ultimate rationalisation of the state, which would have brought about the eclipse of the upper middle class rulers. If one has an uncritical liking for the princes of Orange one will argue that they stood above the parties. If one likes them less, one can say that they had a foot in each camp. One characteristic it is impossible to deny them. They were the bearers, mostly, perhaps, the unconscious bearers, of the idea of national synthesis. This was realised in times of stress by all but a handful of Dutchmen.

The triumph of prince Maurice had no finality. His party enjoyed no monopoly of government. The political history of the Dutch Republic presents the picture of a see-saw, with each of the two parties holding power for a time. The new legality established by Maurice, the supremacy of the Generality combined with the semi-sovereignty of the prince of Orange, did not kill the old sovereignty of the provinces and the authority of that venerable and defective treaty of alliance, the Union of Utrecht. The leaders of the States party had not asked for a pardon, they did not confess themselves guilty, and their principles survived the martyrdom of Oldenbarnevelt. Thus two incompatible legalities co-existed in the Republic. While one writ was running, the other was dormant, biding its time. This is why the internal history of the Republic after the coup d'Etat of Maurice divides itself into a double series of alternating periods. Let us enumerate them here. They will be examined more closely in the second and especially in the third book of this work, which will attempt to trace the fundamental oneness of Dutch history and the evolution of class consciousness among the Dutch.

The years between 1619 and 1650 saw the first period of orangist rule, with the stadtholders Maurice, who died in 1625, Frederic-Henry, his brother, who died in 1647, and Frederic-Henry's son, William II, who died in 1650.

Then, from 1651 to 1672, came the first stadtholderless period. The party of the States of Holland was in power, and most of the time their leader, the distinguished statesman John De Witt, held office as grand pensionary.

From 1672 to 1701 the Dutch Republic had its second period of

orangist rule. The stadtholder was William III, son of William II. He died in 1701.

The second stadtholderless period followed, from 1701 to 1747.

From 1747 to about 1780 the Republic lived through the third period of orangist rule. William IV, descended from a brother of William the Silent, was stadtholder till his death in 1751; his son William V was stadtholder after him.

Between about 1780 and 1787 came a period which one might call the third stadtholderless period. Though William V remained stadtholder, his office was practically in abeyance.

Finally, from 1787 till 1795, came the last period of orangist rule. William V was still stadtholder. He died only in 1805, but fled the country in 1795 when it was invaded by the French armies.

## CHAPTER XII

### REALISM

ENOUGH has been said in the course of this first part of our survey to establish the close connection that exists between the Dutch state and the people that live in it. Political theorists may usefully study the origins of the state, if they make judicious use of what anthropology can teach them. An historian knows only this, that he cannot think of men otherwise than as members of communities which have powers and claim rights that transcend the powers and the rights of the individual. He also knows that, at any rate, so far as Western Europeans are concerned, the form of community called the national state appeared before the nation which it has moulded. In the long run the characteristics of the state into which he is born matter more to a man than the personality of his mother.

I have, for this reason, opened my study of the Dutch with an examination of this political mould which, more than climate or geography, determined their irrepressible identity as a nation. I have, at the same time, attempted to trace the origin of party life, which has coloured the whole past, and must therefore also colour the present of the Dutch. We witnessed the birth of a new state, the United Provinces of the Netherlands—the Dutch Republic—which was the child of circumstance. Within this state a nation arose, a population with a sense of cohesion and distinctness, in other words, with a national consciousness.

The catholics, although a substantial portion of the population, were slower to partake in this process of nation-building. In 1587 the Roman catholics still formed nine-tenths of the population of the province of Holland. At a rough guess, in 1609, the numbers of protestants and catholics were equal. The number of catholics continued to decrease rapidly, for great inducements were held out to encourage a change of religion. Nevertheless, a long time passed before the protestants were actually in the majority. Towards the end of the twelve years' truce it was still said in diplomatic circles that the richest and most distinguished part of the population was catholic. Responsible Roman catholic authorities estimated in 1619 that a quarter of the population of the province of Holland belonged to their persuasion, and in 1627 they reckoned that a third of the population of Friesland and Groningen was catholic.<sup>1</sup> Now, although it is true that in the original Revolt of the Netherlands Roman catholics and protestants stood side by side, it is also a fact that the second phase of the revolt, when the provinces of Holland and Zeeland were in the van of the resistance, presented a very different aspect. Stern calvinists were in power and actively directed the struggle. The catholics were subjected to a rule of iron and had no political rights whatever. The result was that in the early decades of the seventeenth century catholics in the Dutch republic felt no loyalty towards its government and its institutions.

At the period we have reached in our survey the catholics still remained outside the broad stream of national consciousness. But this only goes to confirm that the Dutch nation appeared later than the Dutch state, which is the healthy way of history. It was no different, whatever Michelet may have said to the contrary, in the case of the French nation. With the British too the process was the same. And this is why, unlike those nations which acquired nationhood before they had a state of their own, the Dutch are a wholesome community that fits easily into the international comity.

The process which led to the birth of the Dutch state, and the manner in which parties were born and lived in the Dutch Republic gave rise to a number of characteristics which still mark the Dutch people. A special and highly commendable brand of patriotism associated with a remarkably intense regionalism, the age-long

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. P. C. Knuttel, *Toestand der Nederlandsche Katholieken ten Tijde der Republiek (passim)*. See also *Romeinsche Bronnen voor den Kerkelijken Toestand der Nederlanden*, 1592-1727, in the *Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën*, Vol. I, pp. 261 and 319; R. Fruin, *Verspreide Geschriften*, VII, pp. 267-363.

subordination of political to religious issues which nevertheless does not exclude political and social realism,—these, indeed, are not the only ingredients of Dutch national psychology. But they are all-pervading and can be ignored neither by those who temporarily rule the destinies of the Dutch during the Second World War, nor by those who will have a say in determining the manner in which the Dutch are to live in a reorganised Europe.

The patriotism of the Dutch is perhaps less tainted with nationalism than that of any other nation in Europe. Let us agree about the words we use. Patriotism is neither a virtue nor a vice. It is a mode of being. Every normal human individual is fond of the country where he was born, of its landscape, of the people among whom he was brought up, of their past, and of their traditions. Nationalism, on the other hand, is a disease. It is the expression of a collective "inferiority complex". It upholds the doctrine that the interests of a nation—real or assumed—transcend all other interests, including material, spiritual, religious or ethical interests. Nationalism is the collective worship of the reason of state. It has provided the pretext for fascism, nazism, falangism, and most of the public evils of the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Admittedly the word "nationalism" is sometimes used in the sense of patriotism. This turns it into a totally useless doublet while a deplorable but highly important current in human affairs is left without a name. The result is a confused political diagnosis which must lead therapy astray.<sup>1</sup> The man who says: "My country right or wrong" is a nationalist. A patriot wishes to do what he can to make his country worthy of his love.

It is not surprising that the feelings of the Dutch towards their country and towards their nation should be uncomplicated and essentially sane. National preoccupations played no part in the revolution which gave birth to the Dutch state, and, as a result, to the Dutch nation. I have pointed out at an earlier stage that the Dutch national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*, is almost a profession of cosmopolitan faith. Privileges, ancient customs, fair taxation, toleration and religious freedom, the reformation, democracy for some, the mastery of their own class for others,—such were the concerns that filled the minds of the Dutch when they began their struggle against Spain. In the course of this fight they found themselves possessed of a state, and, before they knew it, many of them had acquired Dutch national consciousness. Many, but as yet, not

<sup>1</sup> It is to be regretted that the useful publication of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nationalism* (1939), gives its sanction to this confusion.

all. It was not only the large bloc of Roman Catholics that remained for many years outside the national current. The orthodox Calvinists did not for a long time look upon the Dutch nation as the final form chosen by Providence for the fulfilment of its purpose. They knew, as we have seen, of occasional returns to the larger consciousness of a united Netherlandish nation comprising the population of all the Low Countries.

All these reasons contributed to making the attitude of the Dutch to their country and their nation quiet and matter-of-fact. Flag-waving would—in ordinary times—seem to a Dutchman an eminently silly pursuit. A man in his senses does not become excited because he is Smith, or Gerritsen, or a Dutchman. He does not want to be what he is not—it is all a mere matter of identity, completely free of complacency. "It is better to lead your own life, however bad, than to lead another's, however good", William James once wrote to a friend. And he added: "Emerson teaches the same doctrine, and I live by it as bad and congenial a life as I can".<sup>1</sup> This poetic doctrine of the significance of one's identity—so vividly represented in the story of Peer Gynt's button-moulder—implies no injunction. It is the statement of one of the basic facts of existence. No individual, no group, ever wishes to surrender its identity. We may wish for the wealth of Croesus or the health of a Marathon runner, but we should like them to be added to our personality, which we are not prepared to give up as the purchase price of health or of wealth. Few nations, if any, carry this acceptance of their identity to the effortless extreme reached by the Dutch. To them, the fact of being Dutch is simply the fact of being themselves. They speak of Holland almost invariably as *ons land*, our country, and of its inhabitants as *ons volk*, our people. The nation to which they belong appears to them as a family, which is the most natural and compact group one can think of,—a relationship which calls neither for discussion nor for emphasis.

The manner in which the peculiar relationship that existed between the Dutch and the princes of Orange arose and grew contributed much to this matter-of-fact brand of patriotism. The other European nations to whom nationhood came at the historically appointed time acquired their national consciousness under a monarch who was their master. There was a king of France, and his subjects learned, very gradually, to think of themselves as the French nation. In Holland William I appeared, a leader, but not a master, and the Dutch fixed upon him their natural monarchical

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, II, p. 238.



instincts. The process of becoming Dutch was as gradual for William as it was for the Dutch, and he died before it was completed either for himself or for his people. This meant, of course, that the process was still more unselfconscious than it might otherwise have been.

There are times of stress when national sentiment becomes emphatic and exacerbated, and displays the morbid symptoms of nationalism. This is no more alarming than the fever which a normal organism develops in its struggle against illness. What is remarkable, and a confirmation of all that has been said above, is that such moments have been so rare in Dutch history. Needless to say, Holland is living through such a moment under the Nazi occupation, but it did not when it was occupied by the French and by Napoleon. Then thwarted patriotism found its expression in the growth of orangist sentiment, and in a clear realisation of the nature of the relationship between the house of Orange and the nation. There was also a brief outburst of nationalism after the secession of Belgium from the kingdom of the Netherlands in 1830. Only once did the Dutch become preoccupied with their national identity to an extent that went beyond modesty. This was towards the middle of the eighteenth century, not at a time of crisis, but at a moment when they made a painful discovery. The Dutch suddenly realised that, politically and economically, they had ceased to be a first-class power. It was then that, in their poetry which was indeed far from first-rate, they proclaimed the glory of being Dutch, while their prose-writers began to eschew words of romance origin as sedulously as they had coined them during more dynamic ages.

Being wholesome and free from pettiness, patriotism can harmoniously co-exist with regional divergencies. Nationalism is ever strained and on the defensive. It persecutes and bullies its subject races. If one considers the exiguous size of the Dutch country, one is impressed not only by the differences between the speech and the manners of the many regions it comprises, but also by the easy acceptance of these variations in a country which has a strongly centralised government. With the rejection of Philip II's modernism the provinces came into their own, and provincialism was made respectable. The Hague never set the pace like Versailles or Vienna.

It is natural that men should sort themselves out into political parties. The alternative is indifference to the common weal or, in other words, fascism. The party is the golden mean between compulsory uniformity and anarchism. The Dutch have many

political parties, too many, indeed. This is the result of the individualism which is one of the gifts they received from their past. But much though not all Dutch party life is based upon religious allegiance. Catholicism and the various blends of protestantism coloured, or rather obscured, the other realities that preoccupied men. They affected their views on statecraft, on the organisation of labour, on the distribution of wealth, and on those other things of which men think first when they step out of their homes on to the civic stage. Religion inspired the Hollanders and Zeelanders who, in 1572, took up on their own account the Revolt of the Netherlands against Philip II. Religion provided the pretext for the division into two parties which has been described in the preceding pages. Before the days of democracy this did not matter very much. The political struggles were fought within selected circles. The masses were a reserve that was rarely mobilised. Under a system of universal suffrage it is less desirable that political and social realities should hide beneath religious distinctions. The church where a man worships does not affect his hunger or his other economic needs. It is not good for realities to grow away from the light.<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt, however, that, for better or for worse, religion has set an indelible stamp upon Dutch character. The sixteenth century put all the peoples of the Low Countries to a severe test. Every man in the Low Countries was placed before the choice of cleaving to the faith of his fathers or embracing the new reformed religion. It was a tremendous choice which affected not only his eternal bliss, but also his habits, his comforts, and not infrequently his life. No doubt the choice between conservatism and change in the matter of religion presented itself to many people in other lands. But often enough the burden of the choice rested less upon the individual. The Southern Netherlands shared the experience of the northern provinces, but subsequent events caused some of the tonic effects of the earlier choice to be lost. The men of the reformed religion were, as we know, compelled to leave the country, unless they returned to the church of Rome. Henceforth there was one religion, protected and controlled by the state. The easier approach to life which goes with catholicism once more prevailed, and the

<sup>1</sup> The national character of the Dutch and their whole mode of living were affected by the quarrels between remonstrants and counter-remonstrants. The intensity of this fight and the fact that political divisions grouped themselves around it turned the Dutch into a nation of theologians whose language is saturated with the phrasology and ideology of the bible. In the twentieth century the Dutch have been governed by coalitions of political parties whose platform was entirely inspired by a religious creed, while the opposition consisted of the non-religious elements in the country.

pomp and ritual which tends to take the place of original thought spread its cloak over public and private life. In the Dutch Republic, on the other hand, the necessity of choosing continued because there was more freedom. Though they were allowed to remain faithful to their church, Dutch catholics could never take their religion for granted. They lived in the midst of decent and industrious people who had embraced the heresy and led righteous lives. To conform was tempting and advantageous, and many catholics did give way. Nor were those of the reformed religion likely to get into a rut. The religious disputes of the period of the Truce kept alive the necessity of choosing and deciding. The orthodox majority among the calvinists had to put up a stiff fight against latitudinarian magistrates before it achieved the freedom of intolerance. The unrestricted supremacy of the state over the church was defeated by the coup d'Etat of 1618, and though the provincial States kept certain rights of control over the organisation of the established church, doctrine was liberated from considerations of political expediency. In the long run this strengthened the rights of conscience. Thus habits were acquired by the Dutch and developed during the first half-century of their national existence which preserved the strength of character they already possessed.

A characteristic which neither friend nor foe could fail to detect in the Dutch is realism. It was certainly not born during the period we have so far surveyed. We saw it at work, however, and we shall meet it again in the course of this study. It is very noticeable in the attitude the Dutch have invariably adopted towards problems of class. Whether we accept them as something that is good or wish to work for their abolition, class distinctions are the very essence of social life. The Dutch are to this day embarrassingly aware of class distinctions. While in England the wives of the physician Smith, the grocer Smith and the labourer Smith are all called Mrs. Smith, the Dutch not long ago called the doctor's wife *Mevrouw Smit*, the grocer's wife *Juffrouw Smit*, and the labourer's wife *Vrouw Smit*, and if these differences in the mode of address are at last disappearing, it is because the distinctions that form their basis are themselves being obliterated. The Dutch word *stand*, which implies the status conferred by class, is untranslatable, because it is so essentially and finally Dutch. The development of this hypersensitive class-consciousness is part of the realism of the Dutch. It was developed during more than two centuries of dictatorship by the upper middle class, when class distinctions were emphasised and formed the warp of the social and political fabric. Where a nobility rules subtle

distinctions are unnecessary. Authority is based upon the realities of birth and the equally cogent fiction of blood. This is the case in England, where until far into the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie, though sharing power with the nobility, did not elbow it out of its original place, and where the upper middle class continued to accept noblemen as their leaders. In the Dutch Republic the masters were too obviously of the same "blood" as those they ruled. They could excel only by seeing to it that the ladder at the top of which they stood had many, many rungs.

At the same time the rule of the upper middle class was in itself an instance of sound realism. It placed the Dutch in the van of social evolution, in a position which in England was reached, and then only partially, after the revolution of 1688 and, in France, a century later. The acceptance by the princes of Orange of the social fact of regent dictatorship exercised on behalf of the bourgeoisie shows that the princes, too, had acquired this Dutch realism.

Realism has probably by now become more than a trait in the Dutch character. It is so ingrained that it affects their whole outlook upon life. Their habit of allowing religious formulas to dominate their political life may seem at first sight to contradict this statement. Yet I believe that a careful analysis of economic developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could not fail to establish the fact that the Dutch move at ease in a plurality of worlds, and that in their theological excursions they never cease to have their feet planted upon solid earth.

Bearing this realism in mind we can now formulate the fundamental doctrine of this book. I believe that the history of the Dutch Republic can be understood only if we admit that it displayed a tendency towards a higher synthesis. This tendency eventually brought about the fusion of the ideals of the States party and of the orangists, and finally gave the Dutch nation unity and centralisation under the house of Orange. At the same time it preserved the humanism and the toleration, the provincialism and the economic sanity of the regents. I realise that this statement has an exaggeratedly teleological ring, and appears at first sight to imply that the Dutch were, as the calvinists fondly believed, God's chosen nation. It is, however, no more than an *ex post facto* judgment made in the light of history as we are now able to read it. To begin with there is every likelihood that without this synthesis the Dutch would have met with a catastrophe that would have disintegrated their national existence. As, however, they met with no such catastrophe, we must conclude that the indispensable synthesis was in fact achieved.

In view of the characteristic realism of the Dutch there is nothing surprising in this. Sooner or later some of the more level-headed and clear-sighted among them were bound to discover the necessity of a national synthesis, and to do what they could to bring it about. Some of the better minds among the Dutch knew that the claims of public duty came before those of party interest. The princes of Orange themselves proved that they possessed this knowledge. By no means all of them deserve to be called clear-sighted or high-minded. Yet, as I have already pointed out, it can be said that most of them were never the prisoners of the orangist party. They recognised the necessity of a dictatorship of the upper middle class, and did nothing to break it. This is the beauty of dynasticism. Dynasticism can make a man greater than himself, and impose upon him a line of action that is dictated by his position rather than by his intelligence. The hereditary identification of a family with the good of the state is an excellent habit.

It required a supreme trial to make the complete synthesis possible: the supreme trial of invasion and foreign domination. France gave the Dutch its stern rule and the lofty ideals of its young revolution. It was then that the Dutch learned to value the community in which they had been living, and found out that without their national identity the things for which they had been striving did not exist, because only what was *eigen* to them, their very own, was worth striving for. They also learned that unless they were united nothing could ever safely be called their own. And so they came to desire, what had until then been the dream of a few among them, the synthesis of the house of Orange and the whole nation, and the state that was the state of all Dutch men and women.

We can distinguish two periods in this process during which, after the disappearance of the Dutch Republic, the national synthesis became a reality.

The first, or "French", period, extended from 1795 to 1813. It was a period of centralisation without a stadtholder. It is during this period that the Dutch—and the house of Orange—learned their lesson.

The next period, which began in 1814-15, is the age of synthesis, when orangist centralisation, based upon general consent, became the natural form of state life in the country that is now called the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## BOOK II

### A COMMONWEALTH OF MERCHANTS

#### CHAPTER I

#### HARD-EARNED PROSPERITY

WE have surveyed the early days of the Dutch state and the rapid development of a new Dutch national consciousness among the people who lived in this state. Moreover, we were able to observe how a religious dispute among the calvinists—still a minority in the population—caused a number of divergent tendencies to crystallise into two parties that held very different views about the rights and the functions of the state and about the proper relationship between the state and individual citizens. In this second book we shall attempt to look more closely at the human elements which composed the Dutch people. We must try to see what point had been reached in the development of the population when the Dutch state came into being. We must also find out how people lived and what they were, during the seventeenth century, when the existence of the Dutch state came to be taken for granted and when it reached the zenith of its prosperity and its might. We shall of necessity have to devote most of our attention to the ruling caste, the regents who, throughout the period of national greatness, were the masters of the Republic.

Three-quarters of the population of the Low Countries were Teutonic in speech. They spoke Dutch, or Flemish, two names for the same language. The remaining part of the Low Countries was inhabited by Walloons, who spoke a romance dialect. Race played no part in the medieval history of the Low Countries. It plays little part in the life of wholesome human beings. At a time when community of language between Germany and the larger portion of the Low Countries might have assisted the Germans in exerting influence over their lesser neighbour, the Germans had little to give away. The fact that about 100 B.C. the Batavians came down the Rhine from Germany and colonised a part of what is now Holland would matter very little indeed, were it not that the writers of the Renaissance considered it so important. The capital of the Dutch East Indies is called Batavia. The Dutch still like to use the name of the Batavians for commercial and shipping concerns. But apart

from what legend has made of them, the Batavians are picturesque rather than significant.

One can exaggerate the influence of geography upon the history of the Dutch, and far too much is said about climate by those who study comparative national character. Nevertheless the fact that the Dutch fought the sea and fought their rivers, and are fighting them still, did put its mark upon their character. A large proportion of the soil of the Northern Netherlands, as well as of maritime Flanders, was made by men. Ever since the Romans taught them to construct dykes the people of the Low Countries have built defences against the sea and the rivers and have continued to wrest portions of territory from the waters. Every man had to be a soldier in this war, every soldier was permanently on sentry duty. There were losses as well as gains. Dykes that had long since ceased to form a sea-rampart, because new conquests had removed the sea far away from them, might at any time be roused from their sleep and become *wakers* once more, washed by the element that returned to claim its ancient domain. The tenacity of the Dutch and of the Flemings is due to a considerable extent to the way in which they had to conquer and to defend their own soil. The uncertain tenure of the land that carried them, their houses and their chattels, gave them an insight into the transience of things. It fostered that sense of relativity which makes even those who love their possessions look upon them detachedly, and keeps open for them the roads to mysticism and to heroism.

Prosperity was an old acquaintance of the people of the Low Countries. It was not, to be sure, the prosperity that rises from a luxuriant soil or is the gift of an easy climate. The Walloons had their mines and the industries that go with them. The Flemings, too, had their industry: they wove the gorgeous cloths that gained fame from the Baltic to the Levant. But the wool used by the Flemish weavers and fullers came from England and had to reach them by sea. It was also by water that prosperity reached the northern half of the Low Countries. Their wealth was due almost entirely to their position across the estuaries of the Scheldt, the Meuse and the Rhine, which provided excellent natural harbours. There was another river in the Middle Ages, the Zwin, through which Bruges had access to the sea. All these harbours looked towards England, Germany was their hinterland, and they occupied a useful intermediary position between south-western Europe and the Baltic. Transit and carrying became the main occupation of the men of the north and one of the principal pursuits of those of the south.

In the twelfth century both the north and the south had ships. Gradually, however, a division of labour took place. The silting up of the Zwin which made Bruges more difficult of access from the sea may have contributed to this development. The Flemings elected to specialise in the technique of marketing. They bought and sold, they became brokers and left the carrying to others. At the same time the Zeelanders and the Hollanders as well as the Frisians chanced upon an occupation that provided them with an equivalent for the cloth industry of the Flemings. They expanded their local and coastal fisheries and turned them into an industry. Early in the fifteenth century a change occurred in the habits of the Gulf Stream which began to carry its rich maritime pastures nearer to the Low Countries. The herrings migrated from Scandinavia to the North Sea. There was a boom in fishing and more vessels were built than ever before. Now fishing was a somewhat seasonal occupation, and rather than leave their small ships idle for long intervals, the seafarers of the Northern Netherlands began to use them for carrying merchandise. They invented a method for preserving their herring catches. Having salted or smoked them, they exported them to southern countries, bringing back as a return cargo the salt that was so necessary for the process of curing. By the middle of the fifteenth century, while Bruges concentrated all its energies upon its important money market, Amsterdam had grown into a shipping and transport centre which extended its activities as far as the Baltic and Norway. In the sixteenth century the people of the Low Countries began to distribute the produce of the American colonies which was brought to Europe by the Spaniards. The Hollanders and the Zeelanders fetched from the Baltic and Norway the wood, the tar and all the naval stores that were needed by Spain for its navy. Meanwhile, Bruges continued to decline. Antwerp became its heir, the home of commercial technique and enterprise, and the centre of the spice trade of the north.

Then came the revolt of the Netherlands. It failed in the south and was carried on with success in the north. Seafaring skill and the fact that they possessed swarms of little vessels enabled the northerners to withstand in amphibious warfare the heavy and slow-moving mercenaries of Spain. The rebels who founded the young Dutch state bottled up the mouth of the river Scheldt and killed the trade of Antwerp. The calvinists, the most progressive element among the populations of the Southern Netherlands, emigrated, most of them to the north. They brought with them their business experience and their capital. Amsterdam became the successor of



Antwerp. The money market, which the Zeeland town of Middelburg hoped for one moment to keep to itself, eventually sought out the main shipping centre and settled in Amsterdam. The year 1609 saw the foundation of the Bank of Amsterdam, 1611 that of its Bourse. Amsterdam was becoming the financial centre of the world. The greater security that came with the twelve years' truce brought about a new growth of enterprise and prosperity. Yet more ships were built for carrying, for fishing, and for whaling. The volume of trade with France expanded. Whether they fought Spain or paused for a moment in their fight, the Dutch continued to trade with her. They also traded with Portuguese Brazil. They extended their trade to the Mediterranean. Their ships went to the Indies.

The discovery and the conquest of the Dutch East Indies is an epic story which cannot find a place in these pages. It is a tale of ruthlessness and unscrupulous cupidity, the story of the collective sin of Spain, Portugal, Holland, England and France. Early colonisation, however, was not all darkness and cruelty. It left us tales of hardship manfully borne as well as of toughness, and stories of self-sacrifice inspired by something more than the desire for lucre. The merchants no doubt sent out their ships for the sake of dividends. The crews too had their eye upon booty. But the odds were heavy against them. Scurvy as well as tropical diseases made the chance of return problematical. The dice were loaded in favour of death rather than of gain. The story is not of economics alone. It is the story of something very great in our own western civilisation, of a dynamic expansionism, of effort for effort's sake, of strength and of vision. It has elements in it of selfless proselytism and of a craving for universality that was the fruit of christianity. And in the course of history, which reckons in centuries and never in the puny measure of years, it marked the beginning of a new era. It was the first signal for the end of arbitrary and cruel oriental despotisms. It was the first signal of the awakening of the East to the notions of freedom and of human dignity. For the Dutch the colonies, however immorally acquired, have ceased long since to be territory held for exploitation. They have become the opportunity for the display of self-sacrifice and of the will to serve.

Unlike the Spaniards, who squandered the gold they came by so easily, the Dutch never lived on the system of "easy come easy go". Before the spices of the East reached the market of Amsterdam a long and perilous journey had to be faced. At every stage of the process human endeavour played a most important part.

Colonial trade was like the carrying trade, a matter of organisation and of labour. Nothing came easily to the Dutch. They had to think and work, work and think, for every guilder they gained as a community or as individuals. They were the carriers of Europe, but Europe commissioned them because they worked cheaply. To work cheaply their ship owners had to find cheap labour. Cheap labour was available because Dutch sailors were frugal by habit, and content with low pay.\* The life of the Dutch proletarian was hard, the life of the Dutch sailor hardest of all. Undercutting and ruthless competition were the order of the day. Dutch capitalism in the seventeenth century was harsh and had little regard for the human element.

The industry which gradually arose in the Dutch Republic was permeated by the same stern spirit of endeavour and economy. Shipping seems to have been the inspiration and the central pre-occupation of the new industry. The nation specialised by instinct in the industries that could produce for export, in the manufacture of beer, soap, oil, tiles, glass and gunpowder. The printing of books for foreign consumption was another flourishing branch of Dutch industrial enterprise. Ships were built not only for the Dutch carrying trade, but also for its foreign competitors. Immediate gain was the incentive of Dutch industry, and no thought was given to the long-range interests of the carrying trade. The Dutch, who made it a practice to trade with their enemies, provided their competitors with the very instruments and means of competition. At a time when regulation and state interference was everywhere the fashion they encouraged the free exchange of goods. Another feature of their industry was its mechanisation, which went as far as the resources of the age allowed. Machines were used wherever possible to replace the labour of men. Quantity, not quality, was the aim of producers who did not scruple to turn out shoddy articles. This applies more particularly to the cloth industry that arose at Leyden and was conducted on the lines of the early nineteenth-century English factory system.

It would be a mistake to look to medieval times for the origin of that acknowledged characteristic of the Dutch, their thriftiness. With the exception of the higher nobility, the higher clergy and a handful of wealthy merchants, medieval men were poor, and had to stint themselves throughout their lives. Yet, in spite of their common experience of frugality and circumscribed living, the people of western Europe divided into national societies that differed greatly in their attitude to the consumption of wealth. The Irish combine

poverty with generosity. The French are close-fisted; they, of course, suffer from the effects of the *taille*, that absurd system of taxation which based its assessments upon outward appearance and put a premium upon unpainted houses, frayed sleeves, and the hoard in a stocking. Primitive man, who is poorer even than our medieval ancestors, suffers from those periodical fits of extravagance known to ethnologists as *pollatch*. The Dutch of the Renaissance shared with their Flemish fellow-Netherlanders an easy-going appreciation of the good things of life, a hedonism and a love of display which may have been due to the reaction that followed the epileptic terror of the waning of the Middle Ages. The Flemings remained baroque princes. The Dutch became what is called "careful" in money matters. It would be a mistake to attribute this difference to calvinism. Far too much is being said about calvinist economics. The vast masses of catholics, who, though excluded from the political life of the Dutch Republic, took an active part in its economic life, were as careful managers of their property as the calvinists. And the liberal and sceptical regents husbanded their wealth and shunned display like the artisans of the ultra-calvinist lower middle class.

Thriftiness came to the Dutch at the time they were acquiring their national consciousness, late in their history, but at the formative period when they were settling down to new habits, with a collective mind that was still flexible and impressionable. They created their own wealth. They made it by labour and by the laborious reinvestment of moderate profits.<sup>1</sup> Carrying and colonial trade, their two principal sources of income, involved those who were engaged in them in perpetual fighting. Deep-sea fishing and whaling were risky for those who ventured their capital in them as well as for those who exposed their lives to gather the harvests of the sea. It is only in the eighteenth century that their money, invested in many places abroad, began to work for the Dutch. Till then even the rich had to work. The English, whose conditions of life closely resembled those of the Dutch, never knew the need to husband their resources to the utmost. Theirs was a rich country, and poverty never stared them in the face. It is interesting to compare the

<sup>1</sup> There is a legend that prince Maurice, when young, once travelled by canal barge—*trekschuit*—and helped the skipper to tow the rope. When he was tired the skipper told him to butter a piece of bread—*een stick te smeren*—for slices of bread-and-butter were then unknown to the Dutch. The prince accepted the invitation and cut a slice of cheese to lay on his bread-and-butter. To eat two dairy products at the same time was looked upon as extravagance and bad manners. The indignant skipper boxed the prince's ears and said: "That's not how our country grew rich"!

methods of maritime warfare of the two peoples in the seventeenth century. Careless of profit, the English sailors used to concentrate their gunnery upon the hull of the enemy's vessels, which they tried to destroy. The parsimonious Dutch, on the other hand, tried to capture for future use as many enemy ships as possible. They shot into the masts and tackle and tried to disable their adversary till they could board his ship and seize it as a prize.

## CHAPTER II

### CIVILISATION AND THE MATERIAL BASIS OF CULTURE

ENOUGH has been said in the previous pages of this study to make it clear that the warp of Dutch life was economic and its woof religious. The personal idealism of the Dutch, their sense of the dignity of the human individual and their love of freedom, were the inheritance of their Netherlandish past, common to the people of all the Low Countries. One of its aspects was humanist liberalism, difficult to distinguish from the tolerant detachment of busy and prosperous merchants. It survived among the urban aristocracies of the Dutch Republic, while calvinism, which provided the regimentation of revolutionary instincts and of democratic radicalism, was but another aspect of the same personal idealism.

Once we become aware of the sovereign importance of these two factors, economics and religion, we begin to understand the civilisation and the culture of the Dutch during their "golden century". Civilisation is a collective phenomenon. It is the greatest common denominator of the aptitude of individuals for communal life. It is the sum total of the acceptance of civic discipline and hygiene. Without public order freely accepted, without drains and personal hygiene, life in common remains dangerous and the chances of success in the struggle against environment must be precarious. Civilisation must therefore be measured by its incidence, not among the fortunate and leading elements of a community, but among the broad masses. To increase the civilisation of the community and to make civilisation acceptable to every citizen is the leading task of public authority. Within the limitations of the seventeenth century the Dutch were civilised. Though less undisciplined than the sixteenth, the seventeenth century was still unruly. It was, moreover, the dirtiest century of European history. In the course of the six-

teenth century, syphilis, puritanism and the counter-reformation made baths unpopular. While the eighteenth century disguised its uncleanness with heavy perfumes and showed at least a clean face and clean hands, the seventeenth century had not yet learnt to be incommoded by its own unpleasant odour; among scores of testimonies the intimate revelations of Pepys establish this fact beyond the possibility of doubt. In communal hygiene the Dutch were ahead of their contemporaries. They were noted for their habit of washing their hands before taking a meal. The proverbial cleanliness of their houses was based, as I shall try to explain at a later stage, upon the markedly economic orientation of their existence. Their discipline, on the other hand, left much to be desired, though their lapses were sporadic rather than chronic. Their regents gave them good and efficient, if not always strictly disinterested, administration. The people usually appreciated this and submitted readily to authorities which gave them prosperity. Opposition was exceptional, but intense when it appeared, and inspired by an attitude towards affairs of state that found its mainspring in religion and in mass psychology.

Unlike civilisation culture is not a social necessity. It is an ornament, it flowers uninvited. Concern for culture is not an indispensable aspect of good government. Culture, which is the reasoned and informed appreciation of intellectual and æsthetic values, has a way of looking after itself. Its measure is the performance of its highest exponents. It is primarily a personal matter: the artist and the writer are driven by individual motives, and "art for art's sake", far from being an anti-social motto, is the honest formula of conscientious work. Yet culture cannot be isolated from social life, and in his appraisal the social historian is bound to take into account two considerations. In the first place, a culture that does not affect the life of large portions of the population does not concern him. It is at best the subject-matter of the historian of literature or of art. In the second place, art is conditioned by social and economic factors which must be known if its history is to be completely understood.

In the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century many branches of culture remained outside communal life. Some arts like music or sculpture suffered as a result. Orthodox calvinism frowned upon the graven image, and sculpture was for the few. The latitudinarian authorities allowed monuments to be erected to soldiers and sailors, while the wealthy had busts in their houses, and wood carvings adorned domestic architecture and furniture. Music also declined

from its sixteenth-century greatness. Many protestants would not allow organs to enhance the pomp of religious ceremonies. John Sweelinck, the father of organists, died in 1621 and had no successors of his calibre. Generally speaking it was all the seventeenth century could do to keep alive its musical inheritance. Dutch paintings show that in the home the harpsichord and the spinet were played, and that the rich had their music masters. Literature flourished in a rarefied atmosphere: the regent classes created a demand which encouraged a great poet like Hooft. The lyric dramatist Vondel belonged to the common Netherlandish past rather than to the young Dutch nation. Architecture and painting, on the other hand, belonged to the very essence of national existence.

There is no need to emphasise the flourishing condition of architecture in the Dutch Republic. Prosperity brought about an increase in population, and people must be housed. There was a fine tradition of domestic building in the Low Countries. Civic pride caused citizens to build for themselves magnificent public monuments, weigh houses, bourses, and town halls like that of Amsterdam. Large and small, all Dutch towns still bear testimony to the number and beauty of the new buildings of the golden age. Moreover, the court circle of the princes of Orange commissioned exquisite buildings—like the Mauritshuis—in town and country. The Dutch of those days knew that they were living in historic times. They took great care to mark the dates of their new buildings in bold letters of wrought iron. All periods build because they must, but many build without beauty. The Dutch of the Republic never failed in their building to combine dignity with elegance.

Dutch painting in the seventeenth century was at the same time a great cultural achievement and an unusually significant social phenomenon. It is true that the France of Louis XIV, unchallenged custodian of contemporary canons of good taste, condemned as pedestrian the art of a country that lacked the guidance of a royal court: nothing great could come out of a republic of merchants. Nowadays it would seem absurd to brush aside the painting of the Dutch seventeenth century as something highly skilled but uninspired. Since Louis XIV we have discovered that Dutch painting is not all realism. The Dutch Masters took interesting liberties with the material world. *The Terrace*, a Jan Steen, at the National Gallery in London, represents an outdoor scene; but the light seems to fall through windows on the spectator's right. It is a studio-work superimposed upon a background connected with it only by the artist's inspiration that moulds the composition into a coherent

whole. Cuyp's dreamy cows are more than a selection of prize exhibits ready for the cattle market. There is at the National Gallery a piece of his before which the sternest abstractionist of our day could spend hours, approving of the ideally satisfying flow of lines, the impeccable balance of surfaces, the two-dimensional nobility of a powerful composition. He would find it expressive of the abstract and eternal intentions of the visible world. It is unlikely that Cuyp chanced by accident upon this herd of cows. The grouping is too harmonious, too scientific, to have been unintentional. By whatever criterion it be the fashion to judge paintings, significant form, abstract balance, or the tactile values of a generation ago, the Dutch work of the seventeenth century will pass muster. In it the thing that matters is not the relation between the artist and the plastic world, but the relation between the artist and his work. The equation of the outside world with the artist is not constant; it varies with the economics of supply and demand, with the temperament and the prejudices of the patron. The constant factor, in Dutch painting, is the pleasure with which the painter pours himself upon the canvas. In an age of intolerant religious certitude, of ruthlessly individualistic acquisitiveness, the painter, completely master of his craft, enjoyed the sense of achievement that is as necessary to most men as the air they breathe. The painter, untroubled by theory, untrammelled by prejudices about the dignity and the independence of the artist, joyfully created for a market that seemed insatiable.

In the seventeenth century the Dutch had more money than they could use. Like King Midas, they seemed to turn everything they touched into gold. Sooner or later, every one of their exports, every one of the services they rendered resulted in the import of more bullion, of which part only could be used for the production of new wealth. The belief that one's neighbour's prosperity was one's own undoing was still too universal at the time to allow of free investment of capital abroad. Contemporaries appreciated the beneficial effects of this plethora of money in the Dutch Commonwealth. They realised that a state which could at any time borrow vast sums at low interest inside its own territory was capable of exertions transcending its size and the number of its inhabitants. Evelyn saw the connection between regular payment and the exemplary discipline of the Dutch army. Sir William Temple wondered why Charles II could not follow the example of the Dutch and provide for his needs by borrowing, even if it had to be at a somewhat higher rate than the two per cent usually paid by the Dutch.

Trade continued to expand throughout the seventeenth century, but not fast enough to absorb all the resultant profits. Nor was there, in so small a country, enough land available for those who preferred that kind of investment. New land was created by reclamation, but still the profits from trade remained unabsorbed. And so the wealthy, the well-to-do, and even those who were but moderately comfortable, frequently found no other use for their idle money than to buy various ornaments, and in particular, pictures. It is Evelyn again who tells us how, in 1641, he noticed at the fair in Rotterdam the brisk trade done by booths full of the finest pictures. Burghers and peasants filled their homes with them. There were farmers who owned from two to three thousand pounds' worth of paintings. This explains why so few painters of the great age were able to work in the grand style, to indulge in the alchemy of a Rembrandt transmuting light into gold, or to dream the romantic visions of a Ruysdael. Portraits of regent oligarchs, and of rich merchants; interiors depicting the possessions of citizens,—investments among which the commissioned canvas was itself to be numbered,—such were the usual subjects that kept the painters busy and provided them with the opportunity to spend their creative energy.

If so much Dutch art of the seventeenth century owes its existence to the necessity of finding employment for surplus cash, this necessity also goes a long way to explain certain characteristics of the paintings that were thus produced. This economic interpretation, closely connected with complicated psychological motives, does not, of course, cover the whole range of Dutch painting. There remains the profound exuberance, the joy of life of Jan Steen and many other Hollanders, so strikingly indistinguishable from the inspiration of the Flemings. There is also the aristocratic quality that appears now and then in Vermeer, in Du Jardin, and others who also reveal their kinship with the Flemings, familiars of noblemen and kings. But, increasingly, the seventeenth century betrays that particular characteristic of the people of the Dutch Republic, their meticulous tidiness and cleanliness.

Most Dutch interiors, most Dutch street scenes, depict a world from which untidiness and dirt have been banished. Nor is this an artist's dream. It is tidiness true to life. Temple and all seventeenth-century English visitors report that the Dutch were painstakingly and scrupulously clean. They say that their streets were as clean as their houses, which were so neat that one wondered if people ever lived in them. These travellers also tried to explain the mystery that made the Dutch so different from other people. In



their ignorance of the true facts they brought in the climate as an explanation. It was so damp, they said, that unless everything were continually rubbed and polished, dirt and rust and mildew would soon destroy the houses and their contents. Cleanliness, in their view, was the Hollanders' only defence against their climate. But far from protecting the Dutch against their climate, their cleanliness increased its disadvantages. Thirty or forty pails full of water were carried into most houses every day. Many housewives brushed and scrubbed from morning till night, and maintained in the home a permanent dampness that caused ill-health and especially rheumatism. This amazing preoccupation with cleanliness is but one aspect of the unusual behaviour of the citizen of the Dutch Republic towards his home and its contents.

Apart from the very rich, who had political and social duties involving hospitality on a large scale, the Dutch were content to live in a small part of their houses. The remainder, including very often the kitchen with its beautiful array of brass utensils and its furnace, were empty of human beings except during the periodical invasions by the housewife, her one maid, and the charwomen. All these untenanted rooms were full of pictures, of valuable furniture and of vases. There were no carpets on the floors: they would have interfered with the cleaners' activities. Sand was strewn in artistic patterns on the flags and over the boards. Only on festive occasions were the inhabitants and their friends allowed into the sanctum. Even the kitchen was too fine a place for daily use: food was cooked there once a week; on the other days it was heated up on the small oven in the recess beside the kitchen where the family dwelt throughout the winter. When better weather returned, the family went to live outside on the pavement. There was more outdoor life in Holland than in most other Western European countries.<sup>1</sup>

Now why this eternal cleaning? Why this almost superstitious avoidance of practically every room in the house? And why this accumulation throughout the home of varied objects, of bric-à-brac, of "brights" that had to be polished but were never used? It was because these rooms and their contents represented the family treasure. The unused linen in the cupboards, the vases, the precious furniture, the silver cups, often made of melted coin, were, like the pictures, a form in which unusable surplus money was invested. The national predilection for this form of investment enabled the Dutch to create things of beauty, and kept artists and craftsmen

<sup>1</sup> See the works of G. D. J. Schotel, in particular *Het Oud-Hollandsch Huizegen in der Zeventiende Eeuw* (1867).

busy. As a result, in the Dutch home, living became a matter of subsidiary importance. Apart from a bare minimum grudgingly given over to sleeping and living accommodation, the rooms were the storehouses of invested wealth. Of this the wife, assisted by her maid and the charwomen, was the custodian and the priestess. Worship went on without intermission, the treasure was handled with reverence, dusted, rubbed, burnished. The connection between possessiveness and extreme tidiness is well known to psychologists. To be worthy shrines, the rooms had to be as resplendent, as beautiful as their contents. It is surely a striking, a startling fact that in the language of Holland *schoon*, the word for "beautiful", has acquired the meaning of "clean", and is hardly ever used in its original sense. The current word for conveying the notion of "beautiful" is *mooi*, which means "pretty". Is this wearing out of the vocabulary of aesthetics the penalty for an ancestral confusion between domesticity, art, and investment?

As early as the eighteenth century a great change took place. The Dutch lent money to foreign enterprise and to foreign governments. They bought foreign shares and bonds, and ordered fewer pictures. But some results of the domestic cult of concrete possessions have lasted to this day. There is no further need to live on the pavement for fear of wearing out the furniture, but the Dutch still feel that they move under the eyes of their neighbours from whom they have no secrets. The habit of turning the house into an old curiosity shop is only gradually giving way before doctrines of purposeful simplicity. The house is still cared for as nowhere else in Europe. Family life continues to be the very basis of national existence; it has grown in strength, for the family, while poorer, has conquered the home and calls it its own.

### CHAPTER III

#### CLASSES

THE state in whose territory a man was born is the greatest formative influence in his existence.<sup>1</sup> It determines, as a rule, the language he speaks, the education he will receive, the code by which he is to guide his own actions and judge those of

<sup>1</sup> May I remind the reader that I am speaking of western Europe? I have no knowledge of the countries that never belonged to medieval catholicism.

others. But of all the factors that modify this sovereign influence, that condition the extent to which he is to enjoy the benefits of citizenship, that fix his criteria of physical well-being and the processes of metabolism to which he will grow accustomed, none has the potency of the class to which he belongs. It would be impossible to understand a nation without having acquired a clear insight into the relationship between the classes of which it is composed. This is particularly true of the Dutch of the Republic. For, although in the early days of the Dutch Republic class distinctions were not as sharp as they became later in the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, class was a reality that permeated the whole life of the Dutch state.<sup>1</sup> As sociologists are unable to agree in their definitions of class, we are at liberty to use our own working definition and to give the name of class to a group of human beings bound together by a similarity, if not a community, of economic interests and by notions and prejudices inspired by these interests. We shall then observe that life in its complexity presents us with more classes than the two antagonistic groups, the haves and the have-nots, recognised by marxist philosophy. We may also find it useful to adopt the conventional designations of nobility, middle class, and proletariat, although in practice further distinctions will be necessary.

The proletariat, the class of those whose wealth consists in the strength of their arms, was clearly divided into two sections in the days of the Dutch Republic. At the bottom of the social ladder was the rabble—*het grauw*—the mercurial and coarse element that existed in every large town. The horror with which it inspired every other class is a constant factor in the history of the Dutch Republic. The Dutch frontiers were open to innumerable vagabonds from the east and from the south who were attracted by the country's wealth. Painters and engravers show us highly picturesque beggars and hawkers who look like relics of medieval anarchy. Many of them roamed the countryside, others preferred the towns where they mixed with the native rabble, always ready to take part in disturbances and commotions.

Clearly distinct from the rabble was the orderly proletariat, the hard-working manual labourer, the farmhand, the man in the dock-

<sup>1</sup> The profound significance of class distinctions in the Dutch Republic can be gathered from the pamphlet K 8670 of 1662. The author advocated the prohibition of the use of silk and velvet to all except the upper middle class. In the course of his work he describes almost every class and sub-class. His distinction between rich merchants with a capital of from forty to fifty thousand guilders, and those who are "a grade below them" is particularly interesting.

yards, the sailor, the domestic servant, all the people whose employment was fairly regular and who shared in the prosperity of the country. They were respectable and as a rule respectful though familiar with their social superiors. The spirit of freedom and democracy which made so many of their ancestors embrace calvinism remained alive among them. Strikes were by no means unknown among the workers in the cloth industry of Leyden and Amsterdam, and the furriers and hat makers were considered to be a particularly turbulent crowd. Even the pompous-looking undertakers' assistants of Amsterdam caused trouble during the famous riots of 1696 directed against an unpopular new edict on burials. Occasionally dissatisfied workers listened to a species of communist propaganda and the economist De la Court reports that when the workers of the Leyden cloth industry were dissatisfied with their conditions they were inclined to call their masters blood-suckers and to advocate the community of goods. Social discontent, however, remained spasmodic. The paternal and enlightened regime of the upper middle class dictators usually benefited the whole community and class differences were accepted as an aspect of the eternal scheme of things. The relation between masters and domestic servants in particular was democratic. Except in the houses of the very rich, the domestics were treated as part of the family; they were hard working and devoted to the interests of their employers.

In the middle class there was an unmistakable distinction between the lower middle and the middling classes. The line was much less sharply drawn between the middling and the upper middle classes. The lower middle class was composed of two elements. There was the artisan, skilled in his craft, and self-respecting. Akin in his outlook on life, not always easily distinguishable from the artisan, was the shopkeeper, the tradesman who had a modest material stake in the country apart from his ability and the strength of his arm. Farmers and master mariners must obviously find their place in this category. Some shopkeepers however belonged to the middling classes. They were the owners of luxury shops like those in the Rokin at Amsterdam, who paid high rents and provided the wealthy with elaborate hats, lace, cutlery and the work of the goldsmiths and silversmiths.

The middling classes, to use the term in the sense in which it appeared in 1832 in Lord Lytton's *England and the English*, presented far less cohesion and uniformity than the others. It is in this class that we find the professional workers, clergymen, professors, lawyers.

though hardly the members of the medical profession, who, in the seventeenth century at any rate, were usually barbers as well as physicians, and belonged to the lower middle class. There were also the very numerous office workers, clerks employed by towns, provinces, the ancient corporations which organised the defence of the land against the threat of flooding by sea or river water, the East and West India companies. The clerks of merchants would rather belong to the lower middle class, but merchants and manufacturers who, without being wealthy, made a good living, were certainly members of the middling classes.

For the upper middle class or bourgeoisie the criterion was not occupation, but wealth. Then, as now, it would have been difficult to draw a strict distinction between the pursuits of the middling classes and those of the bourgeoisie. A manufacturer would belong to the bourgeoisie if his workshop were large, if he employed many hands, if he were rich. A merchant belonged to this class if he were a wholesaler, if his trade were international and colonial. The regents or professional governors and administrators of the towns were a caste rather than a class. They transmitted their dignity in a manner that was almost hereditary, but they remained conscious of the fact that economically they belonged to the upper middle class, and that they shared its interests. They felt called upon to defend these interests. We shall return to the subject of the regents because they were the masters of the Republic and in many ways the truest custodians of its principles and traditions.

The nobility was an important element in the Dutch Republic. In some of the seven sovereign provinces, especially in Gelderland and Overysel, the constitution gave its members a determining influence in public life, and their prestige and power were considerable. Elsewhere, even in Holland, that stronghold of the upper middle class, the nobility had a share in the government. Eighteen of the Holland towns had one vote each in the provincial States; the noblemen, who were supposed to represent the countryside, gave their one collective vote before the towns voted. This meant that very often those town delegations which had not been given a binding mandate allowed their attitude to be decided by that of the nobility. The income of the nobility came from the ownership of land, and frequently also from the emoluments of military employment. When a prince of Orange was in power the army was treated more generously than when the bourgeois oligarchs were in sole control of affairs, and this alone was enough to incline the nobility more favourably towards the house of Orange. Moreover

the prince was himself a nobleman, and education as well as interest made him a conscious member of his class.

In order to understand Dutch history it is important to note how much the interests of the regents and those of the nobility were interlocked. Noblemen did not consider it beneath their dignity to join the board of directors of big companies or to marry their daughters to the sons of regents. And though, until nearly the end of the seventeenth century at any rate, the regents lived so austere-ly that it was difficult to distinguish them from members of the middling classes, they looked without disfavour upon the members of the nobility, and often tried to assimilate themselves to them by buying lands to which titles of nobility were attached, by using arms of nobility as seals and escutcheons, and sometimes even by begging the king of France for patents of nobility. One may say without exaggeration that the regent was a *bourgeois gentilhomme*, and the nobleman a *gentilhomme bourgeois*. The fact that there was so much in common between the nobility, to which the princes of Orange belonged, and the class that was supposed to be hostile to the house of Orange should be a warning to those who look upon the history of the Dutch Republic from the exclusive point of view of an antithesis between orangism and the regents' party.

We noted at an earlier stage that in the days of the counts and the dukes the richest and most respectable inhabitants of the Low Country towns were entrusted with the urban administration. As we know, the rise of the Dutch Republic increased the power of those urban oligarchs by giving them a considerable influence upon the conduct of the country's affairs. These early regents continued to work like those members of their class who were not entrusted with administrative tasks. It was necessary more than once in the early days of the Republic to threaten those who were designated for a post in the town council with a fine if they declined to take office. Gradually, however, the considerable advantages attached to the membership of urban councils and administrations made men only too keen to join them. Moreover, as the country increased in wealth, the regents began to specialise in the task of administration. Instead of standing behind their counter or going to their office, they invested their money, became sleeping partners in big concerns, members of the board of directors of the India companies. One of the most popular forms of investment was the reclamation of land. In the course of the seventeenth century innumerable small lakes as well as portions of territory along the big rivers were converted into *polders* and *droogmakerijen*. Corps were raised where a

few years earlier reeds grew and fresh-water fish were caught, or where the mighty salt waters of the river Scheldt scoured the dykes. Not only the water but the heath as well was made to yield up arable soil. Large country houses were erected on the new land and there was much speculation in real estate.

The rapidity of the change is illustrated by two statements made at the distance of not more than thirty-seven years. In 1615 Cornelis Pietersz. Hooft, one of the burgomasters of Amsterdam, said that every regent of his town was either a retired merchant or still a part-time merchant. In 1652, however, according to the historian Aitzema, the merchants of Amsterdam complained that the regents neglected the interests of trade because "the *Heeren* were not merchants but drew their income from houses, lands and investments". Twenty years afterwards the merchants of Amsterdam demanded that the town council should once more consist of "respectable business men".

Once they looked upon themselves as specialists in the art of governing their fellow-citizens, the regents began to educate their children with an eye to the task they would one day have to perform. The colleges and universities had no courses in public administration, but the future regents of the seventeenth century studied the classics and learned the wisdom of the ancient Greek and Roman political writers. They read law, and often rounded off their education with a grand tour, from which they returned to take up the lesser offices which eventually led to membership of their town council. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century the regents had outgrown the simplicity of their fathers. Outward differences between the classes became more marked. The Amsterdam patricians built their large and dignified houses in the new quarter by the *Heerengracht*, the canal of the regents, collected family trees made to order by professional genealogists, titles of nobility, and country estates.

There was no sudden transition from total simplicity and disinterestedness to arrogant display and self-seeking. Even the early days of the century showed signs of a development that became general at a later stage. At that time Amsterdam was governed by party bosses and racketeers. One episode, which occurred in 1615, may be recounted in the words of the eighteenth-century historian Wagenaar. "It had been decided many years before to expand the town for a third time and in 1601 the new works began. A few regents who had foreseen this extension bought a number of lands and fields situated just outside the walls. They now refused to give

them up for the use of the town after their value had been taxed by the courts of law, although ordinary citizens were compelled to do this very thing. Hooft<sup>1</sup> and other magistrates were of the opinion that the regents were bound to act like other people instead of demanding a considerable profit for themselves. But these regents were of a different opinion and were not even satisfied with the profit of 15 guilders per rod, which is 9,000 guilders per *morgen*. Thereupon Hooft considered it his duty to protest at a full meeting of the council against this conduct, saying, among other things, that the regents had seen a chance of making a considerable profit for themselves through conducting the affairs of the town, and that they ought to consider whether such behaviour would be to the advantage or the disadvantage of the town and of the community; that private interest should make way for public interest; that the members of the council of the town were responsible for its welfare and ought to see to it that no evil was done to the town by themselves or by others. The regents were placed upon a lofty stage and their actions, large and small, could be seen and judged by all. All the understanding of the community was not exclusively contained in the chambers of its government. There were many people in the town full of understanding and who had eyes to see. Therefore it was all the more necessary that the regents should be able to account with a good conscience for all their actions and should eschew even the semblance of seeking private profit at the expense of the community." Hooft concluded his speech with a quotation from Livy on the duties of magistrates. Wagenaar then says, "It is thought that those who felt themselves affected by these remarks became so angry with Mr. Hooft that although he had been eight times a burgomaster between 1588 and 1610, and of these eight times four times for two years running, they kept him out of office ever after. As a result his voice had much less weight in the meetings of the council and he lost much influence in the matter of the theological quarrels". The story of the corrupt practices which accompanied the third extension of the territory of Amsterdam has been told in greater detail by other historians. The fact that dissatisfied opponents were able to prevent the return of Hooft to office, although he continued to be a member of the broad council of his town, is an instance of a practice that was rapidly spreading throughout the Republic.

Although idealists like Hooft, who had lived through the fighting

<sup>1</sup> Cornelis Pietersz. Hooft, burgomaster, a descendant of a family of skippers and mariners in the district of the province of Holland called West Friesland. He was the father of the poet and historian Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft.



days of the young Republic, protested against corruption, the regent class as a whole considered that it was entitled to material rewards for the undeniably efficient services it rendered to the community. It was so convinced of this right that it began to organise the systematic exploitation of public office. Gradually regents agreed to take turns in appointing their friends to office or to public employment. Agreements were made, sometimes even in writing, by which a majority in a council reserved for its members the power of making appointments to the exclusion of the minority. These agreements became known as "contracts of correspondence" or "contracts of harmony", and their effect was often the complete exclusion from office of certain members of the broad council of a town. The signatories of a contract of correspondence paid no attention to the ability of a candidate: his sole claim to appointment was the fact that his patron's turn had arrived for commanding the votes of his fellow-members of the correspondence.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the whole system of regent administration was based upon corruption. There were regents whose integrity would have been worthy of the highest administrative standards of present-day Britain or Holland. Nor did favouritism invariably close the door to talent. Most important of all is the fact that the States party cannot be made solely or even mainly responsible for the system of contracts. It originated in the orangist provinces of Zeeland and Friesland, and became general in the province of Holland only after the end of the first stadtholderless period. The princes of Orange never set their faces against it, and William III in particular accepted it as an aspect of the existing scheme of things, and used it for his own ends. The contracts of correspondence were a symptom of the *malaise* brought about by the artificiality of the party struggle. Each party contained some convinced theorists who looked upon party division as a fundamental issue. But on the whole the leaders of the two parties were agreed about the basic reality: both wanted to safeguard the social dictatorship of the upper middle class. Allegiance and politics were therefore to a considerable extent a matter of personal preference and personal interest. The contracts of correspondence provided a ready means for safeguarding these interests.

## CHAPTER IV

## "THE END OF MONARCHY"

THE regent caste reached the zenith of its power during the first stadtholderless period, which is known to history as the age of John De Witt.<sup>1</sup> Between 1651 and 1672 the regents dominated the Republic politically as well as socially and economically. It was the period of the unchallenged hegemony of the province of Holland, the period when the oligarchs elaborated, proclaimed, and indeed believed in, their republican dogma of liberty and "popular" sovereignty. They were more wholehearted and fiercer than before, because the wounds inflicted by William II were still smarting. Their uncompromising dogmatism was a reaction against unwise management on the part of the protagonists of centralisation and dynasticism. Let us recall briefly how this reaction was brought about. In book I I carried the political history of the Republic to the triumph of prince Maurice in 1618. The prince lived till 1625, and nothing occurred till his death to soften antagonisms or bring into relief the essential continuity of public life. Neither the persecution of the defeated counter-remonstrants nor the discovery of a plot against the life of the stadtholder, in which Oldenbarnevelt's two sons were involved,<sup>1</sup> contributed to the restoration of peace. The war against Spain continued, a foreign war waged by mercenaries, which did not affect the ordinary and comfortable routine of Dutch life.

Frederic Henry, who succeeded his brother Maurice in 1625, gave rise at one time to high hopes among the defeated party. The counter-remonstrants looked upon him as their supporter. The new stadtholder was certainly no extremist, but, while encouraging a return to a milder régime, he took no public step to undo the policy of his predecessor. Throughout his magistrature, to mention but one instance, he declined to advocate or recommend the recall of Grotius from exile. Gradually, however, the persecution of the remonstrants ceased, and by 1630 their small community was enjoying the toleration granted to other dissenters. Frederic Henry worked amicably with the regents, whose social dictatorship he supported and whose political power he did little to curtail. But after 1640 the relationship grew less harmonious. The marriage of the stadtholder's son William (the later William II) to a daughter of

<sup>1</sup> The story of this alleged plot of 1623 in *'t Haegsche Discours* (Muller's Catalogue of pamphlets, nr 1988), and in K 3436, 3439-3442, 3450, 3453, 3459, 3461, 3465, 3475.

king Charles I of England, and his attempts to use this royal alliance for increasing the power of his dynasty, made him adopt towards the growing political troubles in England an attitude that was at variance with that of the regents of the States party. Meanwhile he disapproved of the peace negotiations which were carried on with Spain, and which were inspired, on the Dutch side, not only by a desire to put an end to a costly war, but also by the growing realisation that France had become the predominant continental power and was now a potential threat to the independence of the Republic.<sup>1</sup> The merchant oligarchs possessed an exceptionally efficient intelligence service and felt, in their enlightened realism, that it was unwise to strengthen their French allies by continuing to support them against a declining Spain. Frederic Henry died in 1647, while the peace negotiations were making good progress, and while, far from strengthening his position in the Republic, the alliance with the house of Stuart was daily growing into a heavier liability.

William II succeeded his father at the height of the controversy about the peace negotiations. In some respects the situation resembled that which prevailed immediately before the twelve years' truce. Once more all the interests that stood to lose by the cessation of hostilities were roused, although this time Amsterdam did not support the warlike policy of the stadtholder. Once more a stream of pamphlets expatiated upon the duty of true protestants to continue the fight against Spain. Now and then, however, a note of uneasiness appears in the literature of the orthodox calvinists. They were not happy at the thought that their French ally was governed by a cardinal. Moreover there was far more war-weariness than in 1609, and the pamphlets of the day bore ample trace of the existence of a current of opinion that favoured peace for no reasons of party allegiance. Nevertheless, even after the peace was concluded and ratified, there were many who resented the diplomatic courtesies that were paid to the ambassador of His Catholic Majesty.<sup>2</sup>

William II was not prepared to accept defeat at the hands of the States party—for it was undeniable that the Peace of Munster was a

<sup>1</sup> This is clearly shown in the ephemeral literature of the period.

<sup>2</sup> I possess a copy of a pamphlet reproducing the speech delivered to the States General by the Spanish ambassador upon his arrival at The Hague. The reply of the States General is in the conventional style used by the servants of a republic in addressing the representative of a crowned head. A contemporary hand has annotated the pamphlet and underlined with vigorous indignation all passages stating that the Spanish king's "favour" had been received "with humble service" and "with great respect" (K 6457 of 1649).

victory for this party. He did what he could to embroil the Republic in a war with republican England, and in 1650 he tried to come to an understanding with France to compel the province of Holland to agree to the resumption of war with Spain. Meanwhile the States of Holland were trying to exploit their victory and to balance their budget by reducing the effectives of the army of the Generality.<sup>1</sup> William decided to fight this attempt to diminish his authority as captain-general, and in June 1650 he placed himself at the head of a deputation from the States General which went on a tour to visit the principal towns of Holland. He tried very hard to persuade the regents to give him their support. Under the title *A Proposition by His Highness and the Gentlemen Deputies of their High Mightinesses the States General* the appeal made by the prince was widely circulated as a pamphlet.<sup>2</sup> The appeal includes a highly subjective historical explanation of the origin of the war against Spain, which forms a palpable attempt to capture the goodwill of the orthodox protestants and to revive the religious passions that enabled prince Maurice to make his successful coup d'Etat in 1618. "Concerning the beginning and origin of the war", said the pamphlet, "it is known to all what sorrows visited the confessors of the reformed christian religion, when the rays of the gospel began for the first time to pierce the dark clouds of the papacy. But when after this the light of the gospel appeared to them as clearly as at high noon, when it broke through with violence and delivered them from the darkness of papacy, to the dishonour and shame of the son of perdition,—and when this took place through a door into these countries, through which, by the reading of holy scripture, could be seen from hour to hour what was needed for redemption and salvation—then the pope and the king of Spain and all their adherents armed themselves with murder and fire against these confessors of the gospel. Now as these confessors were to be found mainly in the Netherlands, the enemy fell upon our ancestors and treated them as can be witnessed by the towns of Zutphen, Leyden, Haarlem, Oude-water, Naarden and others. Yes, and they themselves can write in their histories that they destroyed 18,000 souls by fire, sword and the gallows. Who could retail these particulars without being amazed and horrified? The illustrious prince William of Orange, taking pity upon the slaughter and murder of all these poor people, agreed with all the States that they should arm themselves against these murderers and incendiaries." The union, formed by the States of

<sup>1</sup> A defence of this policy in pamphlet K 6492 of 1649.

<sup>2</sup> K 6637.

all the provinces to resist the Spaniards, was now being placed in jeopardy, argued the pamphleteer, as a result of the attempt of Holland to reduce the army.

The tour during which the prince laid these and similar considerations before the regents of the towns of Holland was not a success. Although he was accompanied by 400 armed noblemen, all except the few minor towns that were already on the prince's side failed to be impressed by his display of semi-sovereign splendour. A number of councils made him listen to some very plain speaking. After this diplomatic failure William II decided to take sterner measures. He ordered the arrest of six prominent regents—not even, as it happened, the leaders of the opposition to his centralising and militarist policy—and ordered them to be detained in the castle of Loevestein. Following the precedent set by his uncle prince Maurice, he arranged for the arrests to be made in the name of the States General. At the same time he attempted to seize Amsterdam by a coup de main. But his army lost its way in the dark, and by the time it reached the town its presence had been reported, the bridges were drawn and the whole population was making ready to play its part in the defence. Civil war seemed on the point of breaking out, when wiser counsels prevailed and negotiations were opened between the two parties.<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam, with the province of Holland following its lead, agreed that the army should be kept at its existing establishment as long as the war between France and Spain continued. It also agreed that a few regents who were more particularly obnoxious to the stadtholder should be removed from the town council. The prince, for his part, released his prisoners from Loevestein.

The compromise did not bring peace. The States party was not defeated. That the regents who belonged to it enjoyed the support of a considerable number of their fellow-citizens, even among the lower classes, was shown by the universal participation of the population of Amsterdam in the preparations for the defence of their town. Elsewhere, too, and even outside the province of Holland, the common people disapproved of the prince's conduct.<sup>2</sup> This fact is so frequently asserted in the anti-orangist pamphlets that one cannot doubt it. One of these pamphlets explained that the interests of the common man demanded the reduction of the armed

<sup>1</sup> The story of these negotiations in pamphlets K 6640, 6642, 6669, 6675, 6695 and 6732, of 1650. A remarkable feature of the events of this year is the publicity given to the moves of both parties.

<sup>2</sup> A. de Wicquefort, *Histoire des Provinces Unies* (Nineteenth-century edition, I, p. 448).

forces as much as did those of the rich. "For one thousand rich merchants there are ten thousand poor labourers who have to pay the tax upon bread and other goods the same way as the wealthy, and it is a heavy burden upon these people to make them give up almost one-half of their earnings."<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam continued to improve its fortifications and to arm its citizens, while the States party went on disputing the prince's claims. Nevertheless the prince was stronger than his opponents. He had the army on his side, and, provided he took care not to interfere with the dictatorship of the regents within their own towns, he was free to carry out a foreign policy that would strengthen his position and assist his dynastic policy.

Both sides continued to manœuvre for position. The presses worked day and night to produce scores of pamphlets which presented their legal, historical and moral arguments. But while the orangists published boldly what they wished the public to read, the States party often sent out its literature with fictitious printers' names, or published, or pretended to publish it, in the Spanish Netherlands. The Dutch liked to boast about their free press, but it was a very relative freedom, and most printers sensed with great keenness what they could or could not publish without risk.

The main thesis of the orangists was that "the sovereignty of these provinces resides in the States General jointly with His Illustrious Highness".<sup>2</sup> The States party argued with equal insistence that there was no question of the prince's possessing any undefined or inherent attributes or rights. "His rights and titles are clearly defined in his commission or instruction", they said.<sup>3</sup> The orangists bitterly resented the audacity of their opponents who denied that the prince had the right to visit the town councils and to tell them his views, or who had the temerity to criticise any of his actions.<sup>4</sup> Not content to state their own case, the pamphleteers polemised with their opponents, and quoted their statements at length. This fact, as well as the number of editions of particular pamphlets that have survived, enables us to judge which pamphlets enjoyed the greatest popularity. Supporters of the States party issued a number of dialogues under the collective title of *Hollands Praetje*—a chat about Holland—written with considerable verve and in an excellent style. They have the particular merit of representing the shades of contemporary opinion fairly and objectively, although the last word is naturally left to the anti-orangist spokesman. The English people, said one of these pamphlets, were able to prove that

<sup>1</sup> K 6839.<sup>2</sup> E.g. K 6741.<sup>3</sup> K 6763.<sup>4</sup> E.g. K 6809.

their king was a tyrant merely by pointing out that he raised an army before parliament followed his example.<sup>1</sup> "The king of Spain", said another writer, "would never venture to behave in his Netherlands as William II did in ours".<sup>2</sup> There were frequent attacks on "the pests" whose advice inspired the prince's treatment of Amsterdam.<sup>3</sup>

The need to reduce the country's armed forces remained one of the most effective arguments of the anti-orangists. "What reason is there, now that we are at peace, for not dispensing with what is neither useful nor necessary?" asked one writer. "There is no need to have a garrison in every town, to pay salaries to military governors, colonels and innumerable other officers; it is unnecessary that the military should go about in clothes plastered with gold and silver, while the common people have to eat dry bread and are often compelled to send their children to bed hungry. . . . And yet, it is for the sake of such superfluities that so much trouble is being made."<sup>4</sup>

In the earlier stages of the quarrel, as we have already seen, attempts were made to rouse the religious passions which the orangists used so effectively in the days of prince Maurice. The arminians, it is true, were no longer persecuted in 1650. But they were still unpopular with the calvinist masses. The pamphleteers now tried to identify the opponents of their own policy with the arminians. One of their pamphlets was entitled *An Eye-salve for the blind Hollanders, included in a certain Message from a true Patriot and faithful Lover of his Country, written to his Friend to show how unjustly the free-thinking Arminians dare calumniate and slander their High Mightinesses the Lords States General and His Highness the Lord Prince of Orange in their dirty and disreputable Publications*.<sup>5</sup> What was happening, said the author, was a repetition of the malicious attempts of 1618, when the arminians endangered the country and the church for their own private advantage. "I do not deny", he wrote, "that there are still in Holland many wise regents who are well-intentioned towards the true reformed religion and towards our liberty. But it is the 'hispanate' free-thinkers, the arminians, who have no religion in their heart, who have launched the government in the wrong direction." All the old arguments of the years before the truce were resurrected, and the people were told once more that, as the Roman church taught that there was no obligation to keep faith with heretics, Spain might any day launch an attack against the Republic. Maximilian Teellinck, a member of a Zeeland family of divines, and

<sup>1</sup> K 6824.

<sup>2</sup> K 6839.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, and K 6830.

<sup>4</sup> K 6767.

<sup>5</sup> K 6852.

himself a minister at Middelburg, published in the second half of 1652 a theological treatise written by his father. He sent it to prince William II, together with a long manuscript preface consisting of a monumentally tedious concatenation of scriptural texts. Someone who had access to this manuscript issued it as a pamphlet, probably without the author's permission.<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet was much read and frequently reprinted. It accused the prince's adversaries of being the enemies of true religion and "the uncircumcised sons of Belial", and aroused the particular resentment of the States party. The poet Vondel attacked it in several of his satires, and a reply was published which said that Teellinck was like the bee, whose mouth is honeyed but whose sting is poisonous.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile a number of ministers openly took the prince's side in their sermons. The States of Holland accused one of them, Stermont, of "going outside his office and acting in a manner which could have no other result than that of creating prejudice against the government of their Great Mightinesses". Other ministers were responsible for spreading rumours accusing the States of Holland of trying to bring the country back under the authority of Spain.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the autumn of 1650 tension increased. The prince took new steps to increase his powers, while the States of Holland vigorously continued to fight their losing battle. They realised that as long as there was a stadtholder of the house of Orange in the Republic, they stood no chance of governing the country according to their own views. Once, while the prince had a chill, a well-known member of the States of Holland declared that if he came to die Holland would not appoint another stadtholder. About the same time a member of the town council of Dordrecht declared: "In peace time at any rate there is no need for a stadtholder".

Unexpectedly, while he was hunting in Gelderland and preparing a new coup in that province, the prince was taken ill with small-pox and carried to The Hague where he died, after a few days' illness, on November 6th. There was great rejoicing in the camp of his enemies and in particular at Amsterdam. A new edition of the *Hollands Praetije*, which was almost becoming a periodical, appeared. "Why", asked the pamphleteer, "should the country not do without a stadtholder? Has any republic ever had magistrates like our stadtholders? I have not heard of a single one. Yet they did very well. As for us, we have seen how we fared under the young prince's father". The young prince, to whom the pamphlet

<sup>1</sup> K 6857.<sup>2</sup> K 686a.<sup>3</sup> Wicquefort, *op. cit.*, I, p. 242.



referred, was the future William III, the sole heir of William II, born a week after his father's death. "Let us not be so foolish as to hurt ourselves twice on the same stone", said the author, who also pointed to the danger of complications with England, as the result of the dynastic ties that joined the house of Orange and the house of Stuart.<sup>1</sup>

The party of the States acted with the utmost promptitude. They proved that the cumbrous administrative system of the Republic could be made sufficiently flexible to cope with an emergency. Everywhere the town councils hastened to restore to their full dignity all those whom William II had dismissed. On November 10th the States of Holland appointed a commission to examine the steps to be taken in view of the changed circumstances. The next day the commission brought out a preliminary report, which was at once communicated to the States General. A few days later the States of Holland decided to convene a general meeting of delegates from every province to examine ways and means for strengthening the constitution of the country and for preventing the recurrence of attempts to tamper with it. As they knew that the States General were largely composed of creatures of the prince and supporters of the orangist party, they were giving each province the chance to appoint men who would co-operate more readily with the States party. Throughout this period the States of Holland took the initiative and the other provinces uttered no word of protest. Every one of their moves was given the widest publicity. The full programme of the commission of the States of Holland, formulated on November 19th, was published in pamphlet form within a few days.<sup>2</sup> It included the restoration of the fullest freedom for the election of urban magistrates—in other words, the oligarchic system of co-option—while in towns like The Hague, which had no vote in the States of Holland, the election of magistrates was left to this assembly. Provincial States were to make all appointments hitherto left to the princes of Orange whether as stadtholders or as captains-general. The powers of the Generality—both the States General and the council of State—were clearly circumscribed, and it was made abundantly clear that they were not sovereign. The war of pamphlets continued, with the difference that the scribes of the States party now expressed themselves as freely as the orangists. One of them argued that the death of the prince of Orange was an undisguised blessing. It had been William's intention to appropri-

<sup>1</sup> *Het Rechte Derde Deel van 't Hollands Praetje*, K 6842. See also K 6899.

<sup>2</sup> K 6734.

ate all the wealth of Holland; for this reason, said the pamphlets, he tried to seize Amsterdam to use its treasure to relieve all small men from taxation, and purchase their support for obtaining the sovereignty of the whole country.<sup>1</sup> The pamphleteers of both sides went over every aspect of the disputes of the year 1650 and tried to justify the conduct of their own party.<sup>2</sup>

The Grand Assembly, as the constituent gathering of the new régime was called, remained in session throughout the first half of the year 1651. Although the States General continued to meet, the ambassadors of foreign powers usually addressed themselves to the Grand Assembly. The States General were completely eclipsed by the extraordinary gathering, but by the time the latter's labours were over the composition of the older assembly had become more consonant with the new dispensation. The Grand Assembly was conducted with great vigour by the representatives of the province of Holland. From the beginning the fiction was upheld that everyone deplored the death of the young prince, and that the labours of the Assembly were solely directed towards the regularisation of the situation brought about by his regrettable demise. Special measures for the safeguarding of the Union of Utrecht and of the reformed religion were required. The grand pensionary of Holland, Jacob Cats, who will be introduced at greater length in the course of this book, said during a private conversation: "In a church or in a large palace there are pillars as well as crowns or big chandeliers. Similarly in this state. The pillars are the provinces and their States, while the prince was a crown or large candelabrum, which used to give much light and ornament. But the loss of this candelabrum can easily be remedied, since the pillars have been preserved, and they will have to provide the candelabra as well as the candles". Every province was given the opportunity to place its views before the Assembly. The speeches read by their delegates were afterwards printed and circulated, and usually published as well. Gradually an agreement was reached, which, apart from a few details, embodied the original programme of the States of Holland. There was to be no captain-general in future, the army was to depend upon the provinces as much or more than upon the Generality, and the measures taken during the previous year by the prince were declared null and void by the Assembly.

It was mainly as a counter-stroke to the allegations made by the

<sup>1</sup> K 7040.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of orangist defence: K 7009, 7011; of States party apologetics: K 7017, 7020.

orangists against the orthodoxy of the regents that the States of Holland had placed the defence of the reformed religion on the agenda of the Grand Assembly. But the calvinists were determined to extract the utmost advantage from this arrangement. The synods of the respective provinces, considering "that religion was to form the principal subject of the Assembly's debates", decided to send a deputation to The Hague. This deputation was granted an audience on condition that it should be short and to the point. Five ministers appeared before the Assembly, and their spokesman made "a lengthy and elegant speech", asking for the total prohibition of the Roman catholic religion throughout the territory of the Republic. He also asked that protestant sectarians as well as jews might be kept in order, and that the public exercise of their religion should be forbidden. A long tirade towards the end of the speech, a copy of which was handed to the Assembly, drew a gloomy picture of the moral condition of the country. "It is our heartfelt wish, Your High Mightinesses, that the States of the respective provinces, which are at present here foregathered, should animate one another so that each of them should take measures in his own province against the great and abominable sins so extremely harmful to our country, which have crept in among us in the course of time as a result of the devil's cunning, of bad example, of the contempt of God's holy writ, of unbelief, and of the absence of punishment. Among these sins are the celebration of Saints' Days, the abominable swearing and vain use of God's holy name, which extends even to children, and the unutterable perjuries committed by all manner of people, since as little care is taken in administering oaths as in observing them. There is general profanation of the holy Sabbath, manslaughter manifold, and the easy grant of pardons. There are houses of immorality and brothels, schools of dancing, chamber-players, rope-walkers, true baits to all forms of uncleanness and licentiousness; forbidden, scandalous and incestuous marriages are taking place, there is far-reaching luxury, the wearing of expensive clothes and banqueting to the ruin of many families. There are many more such sins which all of them incense God's anger against our beloved country, and which surely are the cause of so many burning diseases, of so much unemployment, of high floods, of general dearth and scarcity, and of the taking away from our country of the righteous and the highly placed, with which God justly visited us last year and even more recently. We do not wish to detain Your High Mightinesses any longer. It is for this reason that once more, in all humility and yet in the greatest earnestness of our souls, we pray,

beseech, and request you, in the name of the King of Kings, through whom all princes govern, that it may please Your High Mightinesses, at the beginning of this Illustrious Grand Assembly, to take an unalterable resolution for the fixed establishment of the reformed religion, and the keeping away of popery, before the country throw us out and God avenge Himself upon us.”<sup>1</sup> The petition was followed by a concrete programme of twenty points for the protection of the true reformed religion in the Dutch Republic.

“Some of the provinces would have liked it better if the ministers had kept away”, said a contemporary historian, while another contemporary observed that what they said about the depravity of the age and the anger of God was deemed “not only paradoxical, but also bold and even impious”. As a matter of fact, says this commentator, when, about this time, the States appointed a public day of fast they did not speak of the plagues and visitations from which the country was suffering, but of the peace and blessings the Lord had deigned to bestow upon it.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile some of the ministers continued to attack the regents from the pulpit, and preached that the only government that suited the country was a monarchy. Measures were taken against these politically minded clerics, which did not make relations between the masters of the day and the orthodox clergy more cordial. The ministers remained the rallying point for the orangist opposition.

In the early days of the Grand Assembly the Zeeland delegates handed in a memoir dealing with corrupt practices and venality among the regents. They pointed out that if the efforts to stabilise the government of the country were to meet with success it was necessary to remove one of the principal evils that shook the foundations of government. “If persistent public rumours are to be believed”, said those of Zeeland, not without irony, “there exists in this country a scandalous custom of offering and of accepting presents and pensions”. One of the results of these “dirty and corrupt practices” was to undermine the confidence of the vulgar in their magistrates. The most unsuited, mediocre and incapable persons were appointed, they said, to the detriment of the richest, the wisest and the most honest. Those who were thus appointed feared to display their shortcomings in the presence of better men, with the result that they did their best to keep such men away from the bodies to which they themselves had secured an appointment. It was more dangerous for the constitution of a country which is mainly aristo-

<sup>1</sup> Aitzema, *Herstelde Leeu*, 1652 (folio ed., p. 43).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61, and Wicquefort, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 24-25.

cratic and partly popular to tolerate these evils than for a monarchy, and, concluded the Zeelanders, it was therefore highly desirable that the continuation of corrupt practices should be prevented by the sternest means.<sup>1</sup> All the delegations applauded the sentiments expressed by the Zeelanders, and before the Grand Assembly parted it was resolved that upon taking up an appointment magistrates should swear that they had given or promised no reward to those by whom they were appointed. Some regents, no doubt, took this oath very seriously. The purists, those who were already beginning to call themselves the republicans, lived up to the new morality and the higher ideal. But it is unlikely that the majority changed either its views or its practice.

#### CHAPTER V

#### "SENATUS POPULUSQUE"

NOT long after the beginning of the first stadtholderless period John De Witt became pensionary of Holland. He was soon to be the leading political personality of the Republic. His ancestors had lived for many generations at Dordrecht, the oldest town of Holland, which voted immediately after the nobility in the assembly of the provincial States. There were De Witts at Dordrecht at the end of the thirteenth century and in the town administration from the second half of the fourteenth. They were timber merchants on a fairly large scale, and continued to run the family business until, in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, De Witt's father Jacob, while keeping up his membership of the guild of timber merchants, retired from active business. Before he took up the family business Jacob De Witt had studied law, taken his doctor's degree, and travelled. The future grand pensionary, John, was born in 1625, studied classics in his birthplace and read law and mathematics at the University of Leyden. He travelled through France where he took his degree, and stayed at Geneva and in London. He practised at The Hague as a barrister for a few years. In 1650 his father Jacob was one of the regents whom William II incarcerated at Loevestein, but two days after the death of the stadtholder he reappeared in his burgomaster's seat at Dordrecht. Less than a month later John was appointed pension-

<sup>1</sup> Aitzema, *Saecken van Staat en Oorlog*, III, pp. 525 sqq.

ary of his native town. It was at the height of the anti-orangist reaction, and the appointment was as much a reward to the family as a recognition of the young man's ability. As pensionary of Dordrecht John represented his town in the States of Holland and took a prominent part in the negotiations which preceded the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch war. It was in the course of this war, in 1653, that he was made grand pensionary of Holland. He continued, however, to be an official of Dordrecht, which granted him successive five-yearly periods of leave.

De Witt's position was no sinecure. Every day at eight in the morning he attended the meeting of the standing committee of the States of Holland. From nine to eleven he attended the meeting of the States General, after which there was another meeting of the standing committee of the States of Holland. At four in the afternoon there was a full meeting of the States of Holland, during the twenty or so weeks of the year when this body was in session. Meanwhile there were committees to attend, and personal visits to pay, whenever the States of Holland were in recess. De Witt had one secretary and several clerks, and when the States of Holland were in session he was invariably in the habit of taking work home with him. He has left a vast correspondence, and his voracity for work can be gauged from the official entries. In the course of fifteen years these entries covered 22,591 pages of the registers, whereas those for the previous sixty-seven years covered no more than 23,475 pages.

This is not the place to survey either the character or the work of John De Witt. He carried out the policy of the States party not only with fidelity but with conviction. It is of interest to note that this man, who was as convinced a supporter of the absolute sovereignty of the provinces as John van Oldenbarnevelt, was nevertheless by force of circumstance compelled to work upon the basis that the province of Holland held in its hands the centralised authority of the whole Republic. He was repeatedly directed to interfere on behalf of his own province in quarrels between other provinces, a function which normally was performed by the princes of Orange. De Witt hated corruption and frowned upon the habit prevalent among regents of accepting presents. He was able to preserve a surprising amount of secrecy in carrying out his task. If one remembers that the constitution of the Republic offered unlimited opportunities for leakages, one realises the strength of a personality that could overcome these handicaps. De Witt and his party have often been accused of neglecting the army. It is a fact that in their zeal for decentralisa-

tion they broke up the army command, with the result that each province had an independent army of its own. However, while it is true that the province of Holland reduced its own army, it is equally true that Gelderland and Overysel, which were by reason of their position most interested in the country's defence on land, were continually in arrears with their military contributions. De Witt and his brother Cornelis managed by their untiring activity to keep the fleet in good order, so that it was able to give a good account of itself during the wars with England.

Zeeland's deputies to the Grand Assembly, as we saw, described the government of the Republic as being "mainly aristocratic and partly democratic". The Zeelanders had reason for mentioning the democratic element, for they had never succeeded as thoroughly as the regents of Holland in eliminating the last traces of medieval democracy from their urban administrations. At Middelburg the middling classes still possessed a vague and intermittent right to take part in the elections, and popular pressure was more often exercised upon the deliberations of the Zeeland city fathers than it was in Holland. But when extended to the country as a whole the democratic factor normally came into play in one way only: there was a fairly constant appeal, from those in power as well as from those in opposition, to the tribunal of public opinion. Although secrecy could be kept when the interests of the state demanded it, foreign and domestic policy was conducted, as a rule, under the eyes of the people. Whatever the system by which a country is run, publicity and free expression of opinion implies an osmosis of principles between the governors and the governed.

When they were in opposition the members of the States party liked to appeal to the principle of popular sovereignty in such a way that the claims of the States were in no way impaired by it. An anti-orangist pamphlet printed in Frankfurt in 1647, entitled *A moral investigation into the Power of the Princes and of the People*<sup>1</sup> argued that a prince exists for the people, derives his power from their consent, and can be dismissed by them. But, the pamphlet added, "it will have to be admitted that *universus populus*, the whole body of the States of a territory, compared with which a prince is no more than the smallest mouse by the side of the greatest mountain, has as much right as a particular person" (i.e. as the prince himself). It will be seen that at this time the States party were still prepared to share their power with the prince. Once they were in power themselves, however, they adopted the view that the princes could claim no

<sup>1</sup> K 5408.

authority unless it were derived from a commission freely granted by the States.

Another pamphlet issued a few years before the stadtholderless period expressed itself unambiguously on the subject of the double-fronted policy of the regents, whom it accused of keeping democracy at arms' length while at the same time appealing to an imaginary popular mandate against monarchism. It reported an imaginary conversation between a Frenchman and "an outspoken Dutch patriot".<sup>1</sup> The Frenchman said that one could not afford to disregard popular rumours in the Dutch Republic, because "among you the common people also take a part in all important deliberations". To this the Dutch patriot replied: "Among us the common people take no part in important deliberations. You mean to have a dig at our form of government, because it is polyarchic. In other words, there are many among us who have some authority". The Dutch did not envy the French their monarchical system, continued the patriot, because in actual fact it meant government by favourites. "But among us, as is well known, the States possessed authority even in the days of the counts. This is even more the case at the present time, since the sovereignty now belongs solely and exclusively to the States. Polyarchy is older and more dignified than monarchy, as is attested even by holy scripture. Even in the days of the Romans the common people shared the government with the senate. *Senatus populusque Romanus* was written on their gates and on their banners."

Once they found themselves in the saddle the anti-orangists became interested in the theoretical justification of their position. They felt a need to establish a connection between their own doctrines and those of the people who had opposed monarchism in other countries. They insisted more than in the past upon the fact that they were republicans, and the developments that were taking place in republican England strengthened them in this attitude. One finds many traces of this evolution in the polemical literature of their supporters. The traditional system of government by committees gave ample scope for the leisurely development of argument and counter-argument. Whenever contentious points arose in the practice of government, the spokesmen of each party went into elaborate considerations, rich in quotations from the bible and the classics, and these dissertations were frequently published in pamphlet form.

An early opportunity for such a statement of principles arose immediately after the first Anglo-Dutch war. This war, which

<sup>1</sup> K 5507.



broke out in 1652, was the result of economic rivalry. The English government, under the mistaken impression that the republicanism and the calvinism of the masters of the Dutch state were akin to their own brand of politics and religion, had actually tried to soften the edge of trade antagonism and to reach an understanding with the Dutch. Their efforts failed, but, much to the dissatisfaction of the City of London, a compromise peace was concluded after the States of Holland had undertaken not to restore the princes of Orange—whom the Commonwealth looked upon as its special enemies—in their own province, and to prevent if possible a restoration of these princes to the federal offices held by their ancestors. This was the notorious Act of Seclusion, reluctantly negotiated by John De Witt, who disliked the necessity of taking at the behest of a foreign power what he considered to be in itself a most useful measure. The Act of Seclusion caused much resentment in the other provinces, especially among the numerous supporters of the house of Orange. A commission of the States of Holland prepared a memoir in which the motives and the policy of their province were carefully analysed and explained.

This long document, in the composition of which De Witt took a leading part, became known as the *Deduction or Declaration in Justification of the Act of Seclusion*.<sup>1</sup> It began with the story of the negotiations between the province of Holland and Cromwell, and tried to prove that peace could not have been obtained without the previous signing of the Act. The rumour that De Witt had in any way inspired Cromwell's insistence upon the signing of such an Act was strenuously denied. The *Deduction* argued Holland's right, as a sovereign state, to negotiate with foreign countries independently of the other provinces. Thereupon, taking the offensive against their critics, its authors proceeded to justify the Act itself. These critics alleged that by signing the Act of Seclusion the province of Holland had submitted to a restriction of its freedom. But, asked the spokesmen of Holland, expressing a view which was dear to De Witt and which was to reappear in other writings inspired by him, "can the other provinces deny that every war prevents the true exercise of freedom, and that the recent war against the English Republic not only deprived the government of this one province of the faculty to settle any business according to its appetite and inclination, but also took from the whole state and from every single province, as well as from all the inhabitants of the country in general, the freedom to busy themselves with innumerable affairs of marked importance, and in

<sup>1</sup> K 7545, consisting of 78 pages of text followed by 120 pages of documents.

particular with trade and navigation, which are the very soul and inner substance of our state"? The spokesmen of Holland also asked whether it was a sign of the freedom of the Republic that certain people advocated the appointment of a person to the highest dignities merely on the ground of his birth? "Indeed, it would rather occur to those who study the judgment of the sanest among political writers that such charges cannot be conferred without peril upon those whose parents have held them before." Past experience in almost every republic had proved that it was dangerous to hand the command of the armed forces to one man for too lengthy a period. "Have we not seen with our own eyes how, in 1650, the recently deceased captain-general of this state tried to overwhelm the principal and most powerful town of this country with the arms entrusted to him by the state? And apart from this he has presumed to hurt the States of Holland, whose sovereignty he, their sworn minister and natural subject, was bound to revere, when he carried away as prisoners six important gentlemen belonging to their sovereign assembly." Some citizens complained that they found it difficult to understand the meaning of this long and complicated document. Thereupon a plain summary in the form of question and answer was issued, in which the house of Orange was taken to task even more vigorously than in the *Deduction*.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER VI

#### TRADE SUPREMACY AND REASON OF STATE

THE fullest expression of the political conceptions of the States party will be found in *Het Interest van Holland*, a book which was first published in 1662. It is often referred to as *The Memoirs of John De Witt*, and a French translation appeared under this title. The significance of this work will be realised when one considers that the manuscript was read by John De Witt, who made a number of alterations in the text and contributed several substantial additions.<sup>2</sup> The author, Pieter de la Court, belonged to the rich upper middle class from which the regent caste was drawn, but he was never in office himself. Like many of the patrician *gentes* of the period the De la Courts were of humble origin. Pieter's grandfather was an innkeeper at Ypres, his father emigrated

<sup>1</sup> K 7552. See also K 7660.

<sup>2</sup> A. Lefèvre Pontalis, *Jean De Witt*, (1881) I, pp. 314 sqq.

from Flanders about the time of the twelve years' truce, and settled at Leyden as a craftsman in the cloth industry. He rose in the world, became a manufacturer and a wholesaler, and left a flourishing business to his sons, of whom Pieter was the second. Pieter studied arts at the university of Leyden, and read law and theology at foreign universities, after which he returned home to take his place in the family business. He married twice, each time a wealthy heiress. Like himself, his only son remained outside the town council. He carried on the business, and was a learned virtuoso who is best remembered for his attempts to acclimatise the pine-apple in Holland. He left a fortune of over a million guilders.

The spirit that breathes through the *Interest van Holland* proves that the philosophy of the regents was also held by people who, while belonging to their social milieu, were not members of their caste. We must be careful, however, not to read more into this famous book than it actually offers us. De Witt's collaboration does not imply that the grand pensionary agreed with all its contents. Nor are we entitled to identify De Witt's political ideas with his policy. The policy of the grand pensionary was that of the States of Holland, a compromise between many divergent tendencies, which he carried out loyally as the agent of his masters. But the advice he tendered to them was inspired by the general conceptions that find expression in the book of De la Court. The book is a party manifesto only in so far that it expresses the views of the most thorough-going and determined among the regents of the States party. There is no trace in it of the tendency towards a national synthesis which was as strong as it was unvoiced throughout the history of the Republic. It has the anti-orangist bitterness of what was known as the Loevestein faction, and breathes the uncompromising vigour of dictators who knew that they had only a minority behind them. It is a polemical pamphlet born of the circumstances of the day. Its repetitiveness is that of propaganda: like the teacher, the propagandist knows that reiteration is the first rule of his craft.

With the air of a dispassionate enquirer De la Court began by laying down a set of general rules. The true interest of every country, he said, consisted in the prosperity of all its inhabitants. We shall see, when we discuss the implications of his doctrines, that this statement is less trite than might at first appear. For he was moving in a world where reason of state was an almost universally accepted dogma. Monarchs, he said, pursue their own power and interest and are therefore jealous of the prosperity of their subjects. They dislike rich and populous cities as potential competitors for

power. Holland would fare badly indeed if it were to be governed by a monarch! Republican rulers, on the other hand, look upon the existence of such cities as an advantage to themselves. "In this free commonwealth government it is evident that the durable and certain prosperity of the rulers does generally depend on the welfare of their subjects." De la Court then proceeded to describe the nature of this interest, which the republican rulers and the inhabitants of Holland had in common. Let us note in passing that he made it clear from the beginning that he was discussing the interest of the province of Holland only, and that he drew a clear distinction between this province and the six other members of the Generality. He went further, and argued again and again that Holland's interest was not only distinct from, but fundamentally incompatible with the interest of its "allies". For it was burdened in a most particular way by the cost of its defence against the waters and by its disproportionate share in the expenditure of the Generality. The interest of Holland was determined by two factors. The first was its incapacity to feed its population from its own natural resources. The second was its geographical position, which was particularly favourable for trading. The possession of colonies in the Indies strengthened the effect of this second factor. "No country in the world can produce so many ships-lading of merchandise by its own industry as the province of Holland alone." In short, the interest of Holland was the prosperity of its fisheries, trade, shipping and manufactures, all of them interrelated. The inhabitants who did not directly take part in these pursuits lived by feeding those who were engaged in them.

Unlike greedy princes, who would covet the profits resulting from all this activity, said the author, the regent rulers of Holland had no dearer wish than to protect and encourage it. Most of them were interested directly or indirectly in trade, most of their relatives lived by it, and their children were likely to return to it. They were bound, therefore, constantly to ask themselves what were the prime needs of Holland's trade. According to De la Court, these needs were religious and personal freedom, low taxation, and the active protection of sea-borne trade by the public authorities. People who deal in fishing, trade, shipping and manufactures—De la Court explained—abhor travelling, and still more dwelling, in a country where they are not permitted to serve and worship God outwardly after the manner they think fit. Therefore a merchant state must grant religious toleration to those who dwell within its territory. The clergy may persuade, but must never compel.

Persecution for the sake of religion was detrimental to the state, not only because it kept foreign business people away, but because it aroused animosity and distracted people from their useful pursuits. These considerations were accompanied by vigorous attacks on the intolerant clergy of the dominant church, who were informed that, in any case, the true religion "has advantage enough when it is allowed to speak. Unfortunately", added the author, "ever since 1618 we have departed more and more from religious freedom".

The advocacy of personal liberty was restricted solely to its economic aspect. The spokesman of the regents was treading on delicate ground. The oligarchs had no intention of sharing political power with other classes. Like so many publications of the same century, De la Court's book spoke with horror of the rabble. References to the masses, with their inveterate orangism, were not much kinder. The people must be kept in their place by force, and this was one of the many reasons why no prince of Orange should be entrusted with the command of the country's armed forces. "Holland", said De la Court, "consists of cities wholly unfortified, and governed by a few aristocratic rulers, and mostly inhabited by a people so ill-informed in the grounds of their own welfare and in the lawful government of the country, that they will expect much more prosperity under such a potent head than from a free republic; and besides, they will conceive that they owe more obedience to the master of the soldiery and strongholds, than to the said aristocratic rulers; in such a condition we shall find that where force comes, right ceaseth; and that a government cannot be safe without the possession of the sword".

It stands to reason, therefore, that De la Court's plea for freedom was of a limited scope. He argued that Holland could not afford to turn people away: if she did, there would be a scarcity of labour and a rise in wages. To encourage them to settle within the territory of the province strangers must be given every facility to exercise their trade. Guild restrictions should disappear as speedily as possible. We hear the voice of the great Leyden industrialist whose spirit of enterprise was restrained by ancient regulations drawn up before the days of industrial capitalism. De la Court's *oratio pro domo* had no effect, and his successors eventually transferred the cloth industry from Leyden to villages that had never known guild restrictions. By the end of the century it had left Holland altogether to settle in Dutch Brabant, a move which can hardly be said to have been inspired by a concern for "the interest of Holland". Trade monopolies, including those of the India

companies, said De la Court, were also incompatible with freedom, and, though they might be useful "to settle trade", their continuance was detrimental to the common good.

Heavy taxation, the author argued, was particularly irksome for a trading community; if there had been no reduction yet under the republican régime the fault lay with the misgovernment of the former monarchical system. Taxation of traders, fishermen, manufacturers and ship owners as such was altogether unjustified. Similarly, taxes on food were in fact taxes on trade. Ship-money and convoy duties were equally bad: the land provinces, which benefited by sea-borne traffic, left Holland alone to pay for its protection, and compelled it to tax its own shipping unfairly. Holland was also expected to contribute to the defence of the other provinces, which, "for their part, wallowed in idleness and gluttony thanks to the wealth of Holland". De la Court's review of the Dutch system of taxation would be more convincing if his criticism had not been so universally unfavourable. In fact, he made it clear in one passage that a general easing of taxation was the best way out of the present difficulties. "We ought to be suspicious", he said, "and be jealous of all things which have a tendency, either to bereave or straiten us of life, especially seeing we can fail but once, and those that guess at things are apt to mistake." Among his other suggestions were the establishment of tribunals of trade experts, the revision of the laws on bankruptcy which were unduly favourable to the debtor, and the substitution of colonies of settlement for the trading establishments that were the expression of the policy of the East India Company.

The second part of the *Interest van Holland* was devoted to foreign policy. It is characteristic of De la Court's intense provincialism that he included his survey of the relations between Holland and the other provinces under this heading. His conclusion was that "so long as Holland can stand on its own legs, it is inadvisable to make any alliance with those who are more potent. But Holland ought always to maintain the Union of Utrecht, as long as the other provinces forsake not Holland". Treaties with princes, he argued, were of no value. Princes were born to their office, and were never taught the elements of private morality. On the other hand, republican rulers began life as private citizens and learned the necessity of carrying out contractual obligations. Relations with other republics could be conducted on the basis of a common morality. But none of them, apart from the other members of the Dutch confederacy, had interests in common with Holland. Passing

in review the principal monarchies of the west, De la Court argued that no league was necessary with France, which could not afford to make an enemy of Holland; the same applied to Spain; while war with England was harmful to both countries. The best way to avoid such a war in future was "to give the English good words", to leave outstanding difficulties to the healing hand of time, and, in general, to hope for the best. On no account should Holland change its excellent form of government at the behest of the king of England. War was harmful to all sea-faring countries, and entailed needless expenditure. "Holland's interest is to seek after peace, not war", he said more than once, repeating the principle laid down in the "deduction" of the States of Holland in 1654.

De la Court paid no compliments to Holland's partners in the Union of Utrecht. The story of the Dutch Republic was, according to him, one series of mistakes, of which Holland was invariably the dupe. "And though during our free commonwealth government", he wrote, "all those abuses of the said union, which have been so prejudicial to us, and arose merely from fear of offending the late heads of our republic, ought to have ceased, yet by long continuance they have so much tended to the advantage of our separate allies, and their deputies of the Generality, and taken so deep root, that our republic of Holland can hardly compass or obtain any reformation, or any new and profitable orders for its own particular benefit, though with never so much right demanded, without being subject to the undue oppositions and thwartings of the said allies of our union and of their deputies with whom we are forced to be always contending. And of this I could give the reader infinite examples". Among these many examples the most important was the treatment of Holland in the matter of the policing of the seas. The seas, said the author, must be kept open for the sake of the imports and exports needed for the country's prosperity, and for the free exercise of fishing. "Kings and princes and inland provinces never use to consider the guard of the sea, but always neglect it." It was a fact, he said, that ever since prince Maurice, the princes of Orange had prevented the policing of the seas, which before them was carried out as a matter of course. Maurice was little affected by losses at sea; the States General and the other provinces hardly took any steps to curb piracy. As for Frederic Henry, he was totally indifferent to navigation. The princes of Orange wanted to lessen Holland for the sake of their own aggrandisement. But Holland was prevented by the Generality from taking the matter into its own hands. Therefore, it was to be well con-

sidered "whether our own sad experience has not abundantly taught us the truth of the maxim proposed at the beginning of this chapter, *viz.*, that such cities and countries, whose rulers ought to be presumed to be more or less concerned to keep the seas clear of enemies, ought also to have more or less authority and power about maritime affairs, treasure and militia, by which the seas are to be kept free and open: and consequently that the magistrates of the cities, who are any ways concerned in the flourishing of the manufactures, fisheries, trade, shipping, and guard of the seas, ought to be entrusted with them, and no other persons in the world".

Summarising his views about the drawbacks of having stadtholders of the house of Orange, De la Court said that under the government of one person Holland suffered from continual tumults and brawls, and that one might wonder whether the province had not been freer under its Hapsburg rulers than under Maurice and William II. The stadtholders, he said, gradually led Holland into a position in which it was burdened with the defence of the other provinces and was unable to do anything for itself. He warned his readers against attempts to make young William III commander of the army. As long as he was without military power, the prince could do no mischief, but "no surer way can be taken to introduce perpetual divisions into republics, with foreign and domestic wars, and at last a monarchical government, than by setting up such an eminent commanding head".

Towards the end of his book De la Court addressed the ministers of the reformed church, whose anti-States attitude he had criticised more than once. "And above all we may conclude that the ecclesiastics, who in any wise regard the true interest of the reformed religion, that do not impiously trample upon the honour of God, and shamelessly sell the reverence due to themselves for a mess of pottage, should support this free government, and with their spiritual weapons defend it against the encroachments of such a ruler; considering that the reformed religion will be surer and better preserved by the prudent, immortal, and almost immutable sovereign assembly of the States of Holland and other colleges subordinate to them, than by those voluptuous, lavish, transitory and fickle monarchs and princes, or their favourites, who alter the outward form and practice of religion as may be most consistent with their pleasures and profits. . . ."

De la Court wound up his argument with a protestation which will soften the criticism of many a modern reader. "If any man", he wrote, "should object by way of reply that throughout the whole



book I use no doubtful proposals, but positive reasons and a conclusive, cogent way of argument: I answer that all matters which not only consist in knowing something, but also and chiefly in desiring or opposing anything, and which moreover thwart the prejudices and interests of many men, neither can nor ought to be otherwise handled. For if an angel from heaven should propose to mankind such matters doubtfully and faintly,\* he would have but little audience upon earth, and gain no credit by people that have imbibed such prejudices beforehand. So, being desirous of having what I wrote of such matters to be read with consideration, and maturely weighed, and to make some impression on the reader, I have been necessitated to use this manner of writing. And therefore I find myself likewise obliged at the end of this book, when I presume all has been read, and duly weighed, to declare thus much, and to give this caution, in the hope that the same may be made use of for the good, and not for the hurt, of our native country."<sup>1</sup>

Before we examine some of the reactions brought about by the *Interest van Holland* it will be useful to situate the regents' philosophy of government in the framework of the prevalent doctrines and practice of the age. The system of government that was in general vogue at the time of De la Court was born of the historical necessity to create a strong centralised administration for the national states that had arisen in western Europe before the end of the Middle Ages. These national states were welded together by the constant use of force. Men were unable to lay down this instrument after it had performed its function. Force, and power which is stored-up force ready for use, appeared to them as a desirable possession, as an end in itself. Rulers therefore looked with favour upon the philosophy which entitles them to use power as they wish, and which places reason of state above all ethical considerations. The Romans accepted it implicitly: *salus reipublicae suprema lex*, said Cicero. Although Saint Augustine taught christian rulers to reject it, it reappeared in the fifteenth century, was formulated more forcibly than ever by Machiavelli, and guided the actions of all the builders of French absolutism, Henri IV, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. It is no exaggeration to say that the sole aim of statecraft during the age of Louis XIV was the totally unrestricted pursuit of power.

Men who governed in accordance with this system could not have brought themselves to look upon prosperity as the prime

<sup>1</sup> I have used the London translation of 1743, which appeared under the title *Political Maxims of the State of Holland*.

purpose of statesmanship. Let us follow the example of the Swedish economic historian Heckscher, and give to the economic side of the policy of these power-seeking rulers the name of "mercantilism". "In the practical application of the principles of the policy of power", says Heckscher, "mercantilism followed two different methods; the first consisted in deflecting economic activity towards the particular ends demanded by political, and more especially military, power; the second in creating a kind of reservoir of economic resources generally, from which the policy of power could draw what it required."<sup>1</sup> Rulers who practised this system encouraged the import of war material, of naval stores from the Baltic, of iron ore for the making of artillery. They encouraged the increase of population in the countries they governed: men were potential soldiers. In fostering general prosperity for the sake of creating a reserve of wealth that could be tapped in time of war they did what would have been done by rulers whose first concern was prosperity. Does the motive matter in the eyes of history if results are the same? Is the distinction not a verbal quibble? It might be, if crucial cases did not show that it had practical results.

The rulers of the mercantilist age were prepared to sacrifice economic advantage for the sake of power. Moreover, their conception of economic prosperity actually differed from that of people for whom it was the paramount aim. This is why prosperity was considered by the mercantilists to consist primarily in the possession of bullion. For however contradictory the writings of the economists of the seventeenth century may have been, they agreed in recommending the hoarding of money as a national policy. Heckscher says: "The root of the customary mercantilist outlook was not grounded specifically in the identification of money with capital, but throughout in a . . . fateful difficulty of distinguishing . . . between money and what money represented". Once we look upon the money obsession of mercantilism from the point of view of power policy a simple explanation occurs to us. Money was the sinews of war. Without it no war material could be obtained abroad, no soldiers could be hired. Soldiers were an expensive commodity. Their profession was highly specialised, their training

<sup>1</sup> E. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, English edition, Vol. II, p. 31. Since the brilliant paper read by Mr. A. Judges on *The Idea of a Mercantile State* to the Royal Historical Society in 1937 it requires some courage to use the word "mercantilist" in any specific sense at all. "Mercantilism never had a creed," says this historian, and after his pitiless enumeration of the many meanings in which the word has been used one finds it difficult to disagree with him. See R. Hist. Society, *Transactions* for 1939. See also Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson*, 2 vols.; Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, Vol. I, pp. 188-196; Normand, *La Bourgeoisie Française au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*.

took years. Unless a ruler knew of an easy way to obtain money, he was unable to raise armies. A war chest full of accumulated money was an unproductive liability. It was better to encourage one's subjects to acquire money which could be extracted from them in the form of taxation when the need arose.

An international régime of power politics made every neighbour an obstacle to one's own ambition and a potential enemy. If wealth in the form of money was first and foremost an instrument of war, it is clear that a neighbour whose subjects had money was more dangerous than one whose subjects were poor. This is why the prosperity of a nation was considered harmful to every other nation. It was not because the world's wealth was looked upon as a fixed quantity out of which one got less for oneself if others obtained more.

The subordination of economic advantage to considerations of power was taken very much for granted by the rulers of the seventeenth century: they were unable to believe that any nation could place gain before political advantage. In 1664 Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV who provided "mercantilism" with the alternative name of "colbertism", said in a memorandum addressed to his sovereign that the Dutch were trying to capture the world's trade in order to increase their political power. "Upon this", he wrote, "they base the principal doctrine of their government, knowing full well that if they but have the mastery of trade, their powers will continually wax on land and sea, and will make them so mighty that they will be able to set up as arbiters of peace and war in Europe, and at their pleasure set bounds to the justice and all the plans of the princes." Colbert was mistaken, of course. More than ever, at the time he wrote, the Dutch Republic was a commonwealth of merchants. For all his partisanship and his exaggerations, De la Court was right in asserting that its rulers pursued, first and foremost, the advancement of their trade and "the interest of Holland". They were, of course, sufficiently open to outside influences to fall occasionally under the spell of prevalent economic doctrines. De la Court complained that in the past the authorities had repeatedly prohibited the export of gold and silver. He pointed out that no trade was possible with the Levant and with any country whose exports to Holland were considerably larger than their imports from it, unless the difference was made up by sending them precious metals.

After this brief survey we may perhaps attempt to assess the true significance of De la Court and of the conception of government he represented. The mainspring of the anti-orangism to which he

gave expression was psychological. It was the result of the bitter resentment of the leaders of the States party against the illegalities committed by William II. It was linked up with an ingrained dislike of the intolerance and clericalism of the orthodox ministers whose systematic agitation turned the masses against the oligarchic system of government. Less directly, less consciously even—though De la Court himself had an acute economic perception—regent philosophy was the expression of a basic incompatibility. In so far as the princes of Orange were able to pursue a dynastic policy, they were bound to adopt reason of state as their system and to follow the methods of power politics. And here, for all their reactionary federalism and their fanciful interpretations of medieval constitutional history, the regents of the States party were in the van of historical development. To begin with, the eighteenth century was going to adopt the regents' principles that government must pursue the good, the "interest", of the governed. Enlightened despotism, in every continental country except France, took the place of absolutism and reason of state, and the ruler instead of calling himself "sole master of the state", proclaimed that he was "its first servant". But the regents were also ahead of historical evolution in a much more universal sense.

Power policy, psychological factors, religion even, may affect the march of mankind at every milestone of the road, but they are incapable of changing or determining the general direction of the march. In the long run, and by the reckoning of those who have the patient audacity to compute in centuries, social and economic factors are the only ones that count. European statesmen of the age of Louis XIV and of John De Witt may have worshipped the reason of state and practised power politics. But all the while economic forces were at work, unhampered by the preconceptions of statesmanship. In every country a bourgeoisie was rising, growing in wealth and in importance, mainly through trade, but also through industry. Real wealth tends, in course of time, to be shared by an ever-increasing number of individuals. And political power tends forever to follow real wealth and economic power. The rise of the bourgeoisie was a step in the direction of the classless society. In every country the force that propels mankind towards this form of society was making use of the selfish games of statesmanship to further its own ends. In France the bourgeoisie was percolating into the king's councils. In England it was sharing the mighty instrument of parliament with the nobility. Alone in western Europe, the Dutch Republic was a commonwealth of merchants.

It is not surprising that the merchant princes were disinclined to hand over the conduct of affairs to dynasts who were bound to give their ear to the promptings of power policy. How could they know that their own rights, and the rights of those who would one day inherit economic power from them, and the deepest instincts of all those who demanded a blue-blooded leader hallowed by birth, could be satisfied by the sanest of all expedients, a constitutional monarchy? The time for a national synthesis had not yet arrived.

## CHAPTER VII

## CLERICALISM AND ANTI-CLERICALISM

THE *Interest van Holland* created a sensation. Wherever men came together, in barges and coaches, in market places and inns, they discussed this violent attack on the house of Orange, while its economic theories attracted the attention of the élite. Although the book was issued anonymously, everybody knew the author's name, and in August 1662, less than a month after its publication, the church council of Leyden refused De la Court access to the sacrament for having written "a very offensive book".

The orangist party set to work at once to answer De la Court's accusations, and within a few months a number of pamphlets directed against him were circulating, bringing in their wake others that took up his defence. One of them was written anonymously by Henricus Bornius, a minister of the established church and professor of ethics at Leyden University. It was called *Court Conversation at The Hague, or a talk between a man from The Hague, one from Leyden and one from Amsterdam, about and against the false calumnies of Pieter la Court contained in his so-called Interest of Holland, by a lover of Truth and a despiser of lies*.<sup>1</sup> Bornius advisedly devoted most of his space to the

<sup>1</sup> K 8654. Rogge, in *Bibliotheek der Contra-Remonstrantsche en Gereformeerde Geschriften*, 1865, p. 168, ascribes this *Haeghs Hof-praetje* to Arnoldus Bornius, the elder brother of Prof. Henricus Bornius (see *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biographisch Woordenboek*, Vol. III, cols. 145-149). The minister Arnoldus Bornius, who will appear in a subsequent part of this study, was not the kind of man to indulge in the vulgarities and inaccuracies of the *Hof-praetje*. An anonymous pamphlet of the following year attributes the *Hof-praetje* to the professor. The author of the anonymous pamphlet is clearly well informed about the activities of the younger Bornius. De Waard's article in the Dutch Biographical Dictionary shows that H. Bornius was a stormy petrel and an inveterate quarreller, and we may confidently reject the former attribution and clear the memory of the pious and somewhat timorous Arnoldus. The *Hof-praetje* describes itself as a first part and ends with the announcement of a sequel. I do not believe that a sequel ever appeared. The reception of the first part probably frightened the author.

weakest part of De la Court's argument, his ill-balanced and indiscriminate attacks on the princes of the house of Orange. The first counter-argument was telling. "The book was mainly directed", said the man from The Hague, "against the promotion of the young prince. Now we people of The Hague are longing for the prince's promotion and greatness like fish for water. What a golden age it was, when the princes enjoyed their full vigour, state and consideration! Those were the days when money, which is now so scarce, was easy to come by." Another character said: "The whole world knows that though the princes of Orange kept a royal household it was not a charge upon the community and the people. On the contrary, it brought considerable profit and prosperity to them. Every day there was great consumption on the part of the court and its dependants of large quantities of bread, butter, meat, poultry, wine, beer, and other victuals which were not taken from the community, but honestly paid for, in such a way that sundry citizens of The Hague have made great acquisition and profit by the said deliveries". Against De la Court's exaggerations Bornius marshalled untruths. He told his readers that prince Maurice had been most active in 1608 to bring about the truce, "which was effected and concluded exclusively owing to his clear-sighted management". He also said that Frederic Henry worked indefatigably to bring about the peace of 1648, and completely distorted the meaning of De la Court's passage on the prince's neglect of the policing of the seas. These and other statements in defence of the princes were accompanied by numerous learned references and quotations from official documents, from Aitzema, and from other historians. They were, not infrequently, entirely irrelevant to De la Court's argument. But it is by no means certain that the pamphlet of professor Bornius was addressed to the informed reader. One of the characters introduced by him admitted that he had been prevented from reading the *Interest van Holland* right to the end. The other two had heard about the book, but one at any rate was unacquainted with its contents otherwise than by hearsay. We have witnessed similar polemics in our own day.<sup>1</sup>

Bornius found himself on more solid ground when he carried the attack into the enemy's camp, and criticised the system of government of the States party. "Does one not daily witness", he asked, "the slowness with which all necessary and urgent resolutions are

<sup>1</sup> When the memoirs were published in which the countess of Oxford talked so wittily and vividly about life and about her friends, and treated the English language so unkindly, they raised an outcry among those who had not read them.

taken? Does it not frequently occur, when such resolutions have to be passed, that whole deputations have to be sent to such or such a province or town? For to bring under one bonnet so many heads without a head is a matter that requires much time and much trouble. There is in particular the conduct of secret correspondence and of other matters which ought to remain secret, and cannot be treated as secret owing to this multiplicity of heads. . . ." The negotiations that took place during the first Anglo-Dutch war prove that in times of crisis the polyarchic government could act with as much rapidity and secrecy as any other. But in a general way the criticism was as justified as it was telling. Bornius's *Amsterdammer*, who played the part of the honest man who begins by disagreeing but finally surrenders to the overwhelming force of reason, remarked that some of these defects were also inherent in a government under a stadtholder, and asked whether it would not be wiser therefore to leave things as they were. He was told by the man from Leyden: "It is true that government under the princes is also subject to inconveniences and abuses. Nevertheless it was held to be the most suitable and the safest for the state of the United Netherlands. For though the collegiate or many-headed form of government appears to be the best and the most attractive, it is more easily praised than carried out in practice. The heart of man is proud and covetous, and seeks its own advancement more often than the prosperity of the community. Establish what government you like, it will have to be carried out by human beings. . . . However insignificant a person, if he is without office he will endeavour to become a member of the broad council of his town, and subsequently a magistrate or a burgomaster, in order to be delegated in the end to the provincial and to the general States. In short, if one is not a head one will try to become one, by intriguing night and day, by corrupt and unclean practices, and the result is that often in those towns where appointments to the council are made by its own members great families rule as though the government were one-headed and conducted by a prince. Indeed, under the guise of being popular these administrations know how to obtain for themselves and for their descendants, their friends and their blood relations, the appointment to the deputations sent by the town to the province and the Generality".

Throughout the pamphlet there were vitriolic personal attacks on De la Court. Bornius reminded his readers of the fact that De la Court's sister was married to a professor Hereboordt, and that "fishing as was his wont in troubled waters", the author had managed to incite his sister against her husband till she ran away

from home and became involved in a series of lawsuits with him. He called De la Court an "instigator of quarrels and riots who enriched himself with the property of widows and orphans and by the blood and sweat of those he has oppressed"; also "an arrogant scoundrel, a robber of the honour of the princes, a traitor and a usurer". Bornius's tract shows a marked anti-capitalist bias. There was one point only on which this critic found himself in agreement with the author of the *Interest van Holland*: he approved of his remark that war, and especially war at sea, was "damaging and ruinous for this state".

When he came to deal with the religious doctrines of De la Court, Bornius's tone became more violent than ever. Clearly, this was the subject that mattered most to him. The statement of "this abominable atheist" that in Holland religious freedom was restricted, and that this was detrimental to trade, roused him to fury. "Have they not enough freedom?" he asked. "I hope he will not succeed in persuading us that white is black and black white! This chapter is more senseless and unfounded even than the others. He and all other people should know with what great zeal our praiseworthy ancestors strove for the freedom of their religion, and did at last achieve it at the cost of blood and treasure. Should we now suddenly discard it and once more place ourselves under that abominable popish idolatry and under the yoke of the Roman Antichrist? What else would this freedom achieve but to make the papists, who, God help us, have already increased greatly in numbers owing to connivance and laxness, prevail over the true reformed religion? Then would they lord it over us, and throw us once again under this tyranny, compulsion of conscience—*conscientiedwang*—and popish idolatry! What else would such freedom be but our own undoing, destruction and ruination? And what peace or increase of the true religion could be expected to result from such a state of affairs? . . . One might indeed express the wish that those of the reformed religion should enjoy the same freedom under the papists as the latter enjoy here. And then there are those who make bold to advance the view that not only should these papists enjoy such freedom, but also all the other religions, and this for the cultivation and expansion of commerce! Nay, they even propose that one ought to build, at least in every town that subsists by trade, a church, a temple, or some meeting house for suchlike false religions! O horrible and rightly-called false submission!"

Apart from his references to the benefit bestowed upon The Hague by the presence of the court Bornius touched only once upon



economic matters. "Contrary to what is asserted", he said, "the Generality, by its wise counsels and courageous acts, has done much to promote commerce, the freedom of navigation and the welfare of the inhabitants, and has done them great service and provided them with great profit." The economic doctrines of De la Court's book, by far the most important of his contributions, were taken more seriously by the author of a pamphlet called *The Great Interest of Holland answered with Moderation where it is mistaken*. Against De la Court's contention that Holland could not feed itself and must therefore live by trade, the anonymous author argued, falsely, no doubt, but with naïve sincerity, that Holland was almost self-supporting.<sup>1</sup> Its climate, he said, was moderate. What better dairy produce could one think of than Holland butter or Edam cheese? The cows of Holland gave more milk than those of other countries, the fields were more fertile. "Peat, the noblest of minerals, is available while London has to make do with black Scottish coal, Paris with faggots, and other countries with clumsy and quickly consumed fuels." There was so much cattle in Holland that some of it could be exported to the other provinces. "Whence does France draw its cheese, its butter and its horses? And whence England its flax yarn? . . . Holland does not live by its cornfields. Yet it is rich. Poland lives by its cornfields and feeds Europe, and yet it remains poor. What Holland does not harvest on land it harvests from the sea." The latter remark was somewhat beside the point, and supported De la Court's argument. The only sharp remark that escaped from the pen of this civilised controversialist was that, if the Leyden clothmakers spoke as they did, the reason was that they happened to be doing bad business as a result of the war in the Baltic. His defence of the princes of Orange was objective and convincing. The most remarkable part of this brief tract, however, was its final paragraph: "It behoves one to look upon the past in such a way that, instead of despising it, one learns from it to improve the future. Holland must be and will be governed. The princes performed their duty in a manner that was more than praiseworthy. Now we owe our thanks to the States. And there is still alive a scion of the house of Orange. Were it God's will that he should grow capable of serving for our salvation and guidance, and for our common good—who would express disapproval except vile people who are unable to esteem illustrious princes? For my part, I hold the States in esteem and praise our present government which has already abolished the tax of the

<sup>1</sup> K 8655.

200th and the 1,000th penny, and I hope that we shall continue a long time to be thus well governed under God's blessing". The pamphlet concluded with the motto: "Reason teaches us to speak out frankly and not to be the slaves of our own passions or interests". This was indeed the true voice of enlightened and conscious national synthesis.

There are other indications that a section at any rate of public opinion looked with disfavour upon the extremists on both sides. In 1663 a pamphlet called *The Mask torn away from the Hague Court-Talker*<sup>1</sup> dealt mercilessly with De la Court and with professor Bornius, and, while agreeing with the personal strictures made upon the Leyden cloth merchant, said that Bornius was even worse. "The books of both these scamps are of the same alloy . . . and the best way to deal with them would be to adorn one gallows with the pair of them."

A passing mention should be made here of the theories of Dirk Graswinckel, the Delft regent who was a friend and admirer of the merchant republic of Venice, a familiar of Grotius and the author of a number of learned works on the freedom of the seas, and the antiquities of Holland. In 1667, a year after his death, appeared his enquiry into the sovereignty of the States of Holland. It was followed by other posthumous works on the same subject, all of which showed him to be an uncompromising supporter of the States party. There is no need, for the purpose of this study, to examine the work of this author, whom Fruin calls one of the precursors of Adam Smith, and of the numerous other writers on political and economic theory who flourished at this period. Their output attracted much attention in England, where certain circles looked upon the Dutch Republic as the home of successfully applied economic theory.<sup>2</sup> But the survey of De la Court's main work and of some of the reactions it brought forth has enabled us to form a sufficiently clear idea of the attitude of the dominant party during the age of John De Witt. Even the many regents who did not share De la Court's extremer views agreed with his advocacy of a policy of trade supremacy and were opposed to the power policy of Orange dynasticism. In this sphere, as well as in their dislike of intolerance and their distrust of clericalism in general, the regents found almost the whole orthodox clergy with its vast moral influence over the lower and middling classes arrayed against them.

<sup>1</sup> K 8974, mentioned above. "Court-talker" is a pun on De la Court's name.

<sup>2</sup> Fruin has devoted an essay to seventeenth-century English writers who dealt with Dutch life and commerce (*Verspreide Geschriften*, Vol. IV, pp. 245-260).

Orangism continued to be militant throughout the first stadtholderless period. It concentrated upon the advocacy of the claims of young prince William III, led in its frequent campaigns by the professionally orangist military nobility and by the clergy. But orangist propaganda, except towards the end of the period, when the prince was growing up and when international complications seemed to increase the chances of a restoration, seems to have become more restrained than it was in the days of prosperity of the house of Orange. In 1642 Pieter Hooft dedicated his *Nederlandsche Historiën* to the stadtholder Frederic Henry, and ended the preface of his book with the words: "Illustrious, high born prince, most gracious Lord, of your Highness, the most faithful subject (*onderdaan*) and humblest servant, P. C. Hooft". This tone, though perhaps not always this florid constitutional inexactitude, had become fashionable after prince Maurice's successful coup d'Etat. An orangist pamphlet of 1620, printed at The Hague, which pleaded for the immediate resumption of the war with Spain and argued that "a great community cannot live long without an enemy abroad before it discovers that it has its enemy within", described the prince as an enveloping circle, the most perfect of all figures, whose centre draws all that is without. It described him as "the one who knows all things and carries out his secret counsels, communicating them to those only whom he deems worthy of his confidence", and said that "if we had excluded the prince from our cities we should be living the lives of unreasoning brutes, biting and devouring each other, the rich the poor, and the bold the meek".<sup>1</sup>

At the height of the stadtholderless period orangist apologetics had grown considerably milder. We have seen that De la Court's critics paid lip service to peace. A pamphlet published in 1662 to refute "the defamatory pasquils against the prince of Orange and his illustrious ancestors"<sup>2</sup> illustrates the new propaganda methods that were more in the taste of the moderate men who disapproved at the same time of De la Court and of professor Bornius. "Why all this venom against the house of Orange?" asked the author. "Who would deny that the princes have rendered considerable services to the state? . . . I do not wish to absolve the princes of all faults, for *nemo sine crimine vivit*, but I wish to blame slander and to inspire all good patriots with a distaste for it." The princes, he said, held large estates within the territory of the Republic, and its prosperity was therefore their very own concern. Many wise nations had long since discovered the advantage of using the services

<sup>1</sup> K 3122.<sup>2</sup> K 8658.

of men whose private interests were intertwined with those of the state. The young prince ought to be rewarded for the services rendered by his ancestors, and the same obligation should exist towards the children and descendants of regents and of officials who had faithfully served the country. The pamphlet ended with an appeal to all patriots to trust the States and to leave them free to take such decisions in the matter of the prince's future as would serve the cause of national peace and prosperity.

There can be little doubt that the calvinist clergy presented the oligarchs with much knottier problems than the other anti-States propagandists. The ministers were ranged against them along the whole line of political and economic activity. Other orangists could be opportunist, but in the eyes of the clergy all differences were fundamental and they could not be removed by compromise. To begin with, the clergy as a body had a deeply ingrained anti-economic bias. It was, on the whole, a matter of approach rather than of doctrine. We have seen at an earlier stage that the Dutch calvinist church was drawn by two opposite poles, revolutionary democracy and a longing for ecclesiastical respectability. Both tendencies conspired to make the church antagonistic to the regents' policy of trade supremacy and to their conception of "Holland's interest". The revolutionary beginnings of sixteenth-century calvinism continued to work like a leaven in this more settled century, and anti-capitalism came naturally to these shepherds of the small man, who were usually of lowly origin themselves. At the same time the desire for respectability and for antecedents which made the possession of a set body of doctrines so desirable, and the existence of dissension so unbearable, sent the calvinist church delving for intellectual ancestors with the keenness that animated the regent collectors of genealogical trees. It was good to be descended from the early christian church of the simpler centuries, but it was better still to have canon law to quote from. The condemnation of usury, long since jettisoned by Rome and abandoned by the mother church of Geneva, still fascinated many Dutch divines.

Gisbertus Voetius, who died in 1676 at the ripe age of 87 and was the doyen of the dogmatists, led the opposition of the clergy against regent economics. He was professor of divinity, of hebrew and oriental languages at the university of Utrecht. To his counter-remonstrant, anti-papist, anti-cartesian teaching, to his puritanical agitation against dancing, the stage, the national delight in the pleasures of the table and the display of wealth in private homes, he added an intense dislike of pawn-shops, no matter whether

privately owned or run by the urban authorities. He frowned upon the use of money as a means to acquire money, and was instrumental in the excommunication of a god-fearing woman because her husband was employed in a pawn-shop. He found an opponent in the Frenchman Salmasius, who lectured in ecclesiastical history at Leyden, and who raised a plea in favour of the useful institutions that advanced small sums to temporarily embarrassed people. The fact that Salmasius found it necessary to include in his works three treatises, *De Usuris* of 1638, *De Modo Usurarum* of 1639 and *De Mutuo* of 1645, shows what widespread interest was taken in matters of loans and of interest. The school of Voetius fought a losing battle, but it fought with vigour and managed to keep alive in many parishes a disinclination to admit to holy communion anyone connected with the pawnbrokers' trade. The point at issue was slight, but it found the regents and an important section of the clergy in opposite camps, and it was, moreover, symbolic of a deeper-seated divergence on the general issue of the legitimacy of large material profits.<sup>1</sup>

There was another and more important matter where the regents found the church equally antagonistic, but this time without a trace of divided counsels. The church claimed supremacy in the state, and claimed it mainly in order to secure for itself a monopoly and the right to restrict the religious liberty of other sects. The synod of Dordrecht in 1619 saw the triumph of unwavering orthodoxy, and freed the church from regent interference in matters of doctrine. But in matters of discipline the public authorities continued to wield considerable powers. The church never admitted the distinction. Its ideal was the theocratic dispensation of the early days of Geneva calvinism. In 1631 a pamphleteer argued that the Dutch Republic was intended by God to be the new Israel, and that its constitution must in every respect be modelled upon that of the ancient jews.<sup>2</sup> We have heard professor Bornius accusing the protagonists of toleration of being atheists. Such views did not prevent the orthodox from posing, or rather from seeing themselves, as the true champions of the freedom of conscience. This conception was forcefully presented by the minister H. A. van der Linde in his book on *The Coercion of Conscience*, published in 1629.<sup>3</sup> Frederic Henry was stadtholder, and the restrictions against the remonstrants were

<sup>1</sup> See the arguments of both sides in K 7906 and 7907, published in 1657.

<sup>2</sup> K 4159.

<sup>3</sup> *Conscientie-dwangh* (K 3969). Though catalogued as a pamphlet, this book contains 144 closely printed pages. The name pamphlet is sometimes misleading. No satisfactory definition of it has ever been given.

gradually being relaxed. Van der Linde tried to arrest the tide by a timely plea for "freedom of conscience". This freedom, he said, had been the object of the fight of the Dutch nation since the beginning of the war against Spain. But it consisted merely in the right of every citizen to hold, within the secret folds of his heart, such views as his conscience imposed on him. No one could forbid the harbouring of such thoughts without infringing the freedom of conscience. Freedom of worship, however, was a very different matter. "God refuses to allow his truth to become mixed with lies and errors. . . . And if the authorities grant the free exercise of their particular form of worship to all kinds of sects, what else is this but to declare that there is little or no difference between truth and lies, between the true church of Christ and the gatherings of the sects? Any private christian has the duty to admonish his neighbour if his soul is in danger. Shall christian authorities then knowingly permit their subjects to be tempted and misled to the damage of their souls? Are they not bound to defend God's sanctifying truth, and to favour the building of the kingdom of Christ and its increase, that they may kiss the Son, lest he be angry (Psalms II, 12)?" The lack of response which such demands brought forth from the ranks of the regents, even at times when there was a powerful stadtholder, caused the champions of intolerance to turn towards the States General, which were invariably more pliant. In 1631 a pamphleteer, who argued that "all the United Provinces have adopted the reformed religion and wish to propagate, advance and protect this religion alone", declared that "the matter of religion comes within the resort of their High Mightinesses the States General, otherwise of all the united provinces *conjunctim*, and not of each province separately and alone".<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that there was a marked anti-clerical tendency among the regents of Holland. The third part of the *Hollands Praetje*, the series of States party pamphlets which has been quoted before, contains a number of attacks on the clergy, and is by no means alone of its kind. "Ministers are no saints", said one of the characters introduced by the author of this pamphlet. Many of them were above reproach, but "when they begin to throw suspicion upon the lawful authorities and try to achieve changes in the government, they are not the teachers and shepherds of the people, but hirelings, thieves, and murderers of their flock". Another character gave vent to an opinion that would have increased the scruples of conscience of Mark Robarts in Anthony Trollope's *Framley Parsonage*.

<sup>1</sup> K 4175.

"Ministers who go a-hunting like the nobility! Riding to hounds? Never in my life have I heard of such a thing! How will their arses stand up to it? I'm sure they will always have to go about on horseback. They won't condescend to walk any more!" Thereupon another character said: "Recently a few of these *predikanten* were together and after a few glasses they began to brag about their hunting and riding. One of them said: 'I can't ride, but *dominus* Goedhals rides his horse very well'. Trigland, who was one of the crowd, observed—and note the mockery, if not the blasphemy—'I mount my horse about as well as Our Lord did his ass!' I shudder when I am told such outrageous things! And these are the preachers who tell us not to take God's name in vain, and who presume to reproach our authorities for not being well intentioned towards religion. How much they themselves take religion to heart can be seen from their daily drinking bouts and their idle and loose talk when they are invited out." Thereupon came the story of a drunken conversation between ministers who behaved at the wedding of one of their number "as though they had been young students". Their preaching was a matter of bread and butter in which there was no conviction. Out of the pulpit they were true epicures and sadducees. "But when they attack our magistrates we shall show them no mercy."<sup>1</sup> Although as a rule the regents were guarded in their public utterances about the clergy, everything, from their administrative experience to their libertarian and humanistic traditions, encouraged their inclination to keep the clergy at arms' length and their determination to preserve intact the authority of the States in matters of ecclesiastic administration.<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE PORTRAIT OF A REGENT: JACOB CATS

WE have seen the regent in politics, discussing and indeed settling world affairs at the meeting of the council of a little town in the province of Holland, or fighting, and often suffering, for the federal conception of the Dutch state through which he wished to safeguard the interests of his class. We have

<sup>1</sup> K 6842 of 1650.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting instance of regent humanism in a pamphlet entitled *A sure Way to real Peace in the Country*, suggesting that all who accept the fundamental tenets of revealed christianity shall be left free to worship in their own manner, while the calvinist church shall be made entirely independent of state tutelage (Muller's Catalogue, 2418, of 1630).

had a glimpse of the regent-theorist, of the enlightened and thinking regent. But we have not yet seen the average regent with his humanity and his frailties, with his devotion to duty and his circumscribed ability. John De Witt was the best of the regents, and probably not too representative of the common run. Other regents, however, have left sufficient traces to stand out before our eyes as life-like and as three-dimensional as they appear in the portraits and groups of Frans Hals. I shall now attempt to tell the story of a very human regent, Jacob Cats.

Almost every Netherlander, be he Dutch or Flemish, has heard the name of the poet Jacob Cats. This fertile rhymester, who flourished in the first half of the seventeenth century, was the most-read author in the Dutch Republic, and almost as popular in the Southern Netherlands. By the time of his death his compatriots were referring to him as "the great Cats", and quoted his verse in the course of conversation.<sup>1</sup> To this day many peasants in Zeeland are almost as familiar with Cats as with the bible. He was not a great poet, but his humdrum alexandrines provided the Dutch with an attractive compendium of their own worldly and spiritual wisdom. Father Cats, as he is still called, put in writing the whole code of behaviour, including the table manners, of a bourgeois civilisation. His hygienic precepts were sound, his rule-of-thumb psychology was accurate. He was an indefatigable collector of the proverbs of many nations. The exponent of a civilisation which, like that of the English puritans, was not mealy-mouthed, he wrote a vast treatise of love and of sexlore which is as erudite as it is sensible. *Houwelick*—a guide to marriage—was published in 1624, the year before prince Maurice died. Its six parts deal with the maiden, the betrothed, the bride—including a guide for the behaviour of wedding guests—the wife, the mother and the widow, and explain "the whole conduct of the matrimonial state", without overlooking "the masculine counter-obligations". Among the many pearls of wisdom lavishly distributed by Cats some are of real value for our knowledge of the manners of the period. A husband, said Cats, should refrain from meddling with household affairs and with the education of the children. His time to deal with the children comes when they are grown up and when their marriage settlement has to be discussed. The wife, on the other hand, should recognise that her husband is her superior. "A wanton custom", he said with a sigh, "is creeping into our manners. The wife is often nowadays made to walk on the right hand of her husband, in the place of

<sup>1</sup> See K 8646.



honour, which is opposed to God's ancient laws." A wife who took the place of honour when in the company of her husband was as bad, thought Cats, as a woman who played chess.

Cats's *error* is immense. It contains stories old and new, with plots from the bible, the classics, and contemporary foreign authors. He reverted frequently to the topic of marriage. He showed a Dutchman's appreciation of the beauties of nature once nature has been tidied by the hand of man. In his ripe old age his productive powers increased, and among a number of other works he wrote a long autobiography in verse. This autobiography is as remarkable in its way as the diary of Pepys. It was terminated in 1657, three years before the beginning of the great English diary. Cats intended his autobiography to be published after his death, and it appeared for the first time in 1700. It was naturally less outspoken than the English diary which was not meant for the public eye. But it was inspired by the same modern spirit which characterises the writing of Pepys. Modern man, born in western Europe at the time of the Renaissance, did not grow to full stature until the latter part of the seventeenth century. It took a long time for him to grow up and to learn the use of the mental autonomy of which the Renaissance rediscovered the principle. Some time before the end of the seventeenth century he appeared in the shape which we nowadays feel to be our very own. He became aware of his environment, looked at the outside world with a new curiosity and began to study its mechanism by means of rational experiments. He discovered the diversity of human types almost at the same time as he postulated the uniformity of the processes of nature. He laid the foundations of romanticism which emphasises the connection between human beings and their environment. Pepys is the first modern Englishman. In France intellectual authoritarianism kept back the development, and we have to wait till Saint Simon for the first of the moderns. But in the Low Countries Cats inaugurated modernism a generation before Pepys. The fact that a modicum of freedom had been achieved by the Dutch before it came to the English goes a long way to explain the Dutch priority in time.<sup>1</sup>

It is not as the writer of poor verse with an immense psychological and cultural significance that I wish to introduce Jacob Cats. Apart from the fact that, like Pepys and like Saint Simon, he had a

<sup>1</sup> I do not deny, of course, that there were precursors. Both Montaigne and Fénelon can be called moderns. So, in some respects, can Dante. As for the *archipoeta* of the twelfth century, the first man in christendom to make peace with his own temperament, he is as much a modern as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. See Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la Conscience Européenne*.

mania for writing, he was a typical Dutch regent, and this is why he finds a place in these pages. His autobiography enables us to see the Dutch regent with a vividness that is conjured up by no other document. It is mainly upon this work that I shall base this brief sketch of his personality.

Jacob Cats was born in 1577 at Brouwershaven on the island of Schouwen, in Zeeland. Brouwershaven was a small, prosperous town, the northernmost port in Zeeland, and was used for the import of produce from Holland. Its inhabitants were active in the coastal and deep-seas fishery, and manufactured dyes and cloth on a very small scale. Brouwershaven was overshadowed by the larger town of Zierikzee on the south side of the island. The northern part of the island could have charmed none but a born Zeelander. It was flat and almost tree-less. Part of the district round Brouwershaven was marshy. If there was no wood, neither was there peat, and the usual fuel, apart from what was imported for the use of well-to-do townspeople, was cow-dung dried and cut after the manner of peat. There was no agriculture, but the endless meadows fed large herds of cattle, while waterfowl lived on many creeks and small lakes.

Cats's ancestors had lived for many generations at Brouwershaven, and though, as he says, "my parents never boasted a noble origin", they had become eminent in their diminutive community. Jacob's father Adrian was a regent, and, more than once, when his turn came, a burgomaster. Life was quiet and slow in this corner of Schouwen, and the new ideas of the sixteenth century failed to reach Brouwershaven. The calvinist agitation, the revolt of the Netherlands, the heroic stand of Holland and Zeeland under William of Orange, did not ruffle the equanimity of the peasant-merchants, and though they were drawn into the struggle for independence in 1573, they remained lukewarm and protested from the beginning against the taxation imposed upon them by the officers of the prince of Orange. In 1575 the small garrison of Brouwershaven surrendered to the Spaniards without a show of resistance. The soldiers explained that most of the inhabitants were papists, and would have been unreliable during a siege. At the beginning of the troubles the Cats family was still partly Roman catholic. Adrian's brother Mathias studied at Louvain, became a Franciscan and was made provincial of his order. He was a learned man and the author of several theological treatises, to whom Jacob Cats referred proudly, mentioning with scholarly satisfaction that his works were printed by the great Plantin of Antwerp. "When the

tides change the beacons are shifted", says one of those proverbs *Vader Cats* liked to illustrate and paraphrase in his writings, and, with the earthborn realism that reminds one of the world of the fable writer Lafontaine, his family embraced the new religion just early enough not to be expelled from the regents' caste.

Jacob himself was brought up a protestant. His mother died when he was two years of age, and his father married Jolente de Grande, a Walloon "of noble blood", but impoverished as a result of the war. Jacob's aunt did not like the idea of her sister's son being brought up by this foreign stepmother. She therefore adopted him and carried him away to Zierikzee, which was the second town of Zeeland in order of dignity. It had been an important manufacturing centre with numerous and busy salt works. Its harbour, connected by a short canal with the eastern Scheldt, looked towards the south and enabled the town to share in the maritime enterprise of Zeeland. Zierikzee had lost much of its former prosperity, and suffered considerably during the early stage of the war of liberation. But after the fall of Antwerp in 1585 it temporarily recovered some of its earlier greatness. The population of Zierikzee was more open to outside influences than that of Brouwershaven; anabaptism penetrated its precincts in the thirties of the sixteenth century, and when William of Orange raised the standard of revolt the calvinists compelled its magistrates to open the gates to the national forces. This town provided the background of Cats's childhood and adolescent years, spent at first in the stern but not unkindly home of his uncle, and then at the Latin school where he became a boarder. A chamber maid who looked after the pupils entertained them with loose talk and flirtation, and bestowed greater favours upon some of them. Cats assures us that he himself did not lose his innocence, but that the atmosphere that reigned in the boarding school was not conducive to seriousness. His aunt discovered what was afoot, and spent many hours reasoning and wrestling with him in an endeavour to convince him that idleness and self-indulgence would never bring him happiness. It must be said, in defence of his later didacticism, that he showed himself a good listener, and open to persuasion. He threw himself upon his books, and made such rapid progress that he was soon able to write Latin verse for his private delectation. A young Fleming who arrived at Zierikzee about this time convinced him that his poetic effusions ought to be written in the Dutch tongue, and turned the budding humanist into a popular writer.

While still in his teens, Cats was sent to the university of Leyden where he studied Greek and law. With five other students he was

boarded on a professor, in whose house the experience of the boarding school was repeated. He squandered his time, more as a spectator than a participant, on the fringes of the amours of his fellow-students. A good-looking wench who spoke fluent French undertook, with more generosity than discrimination, to settle the problems of their adolescent sexualities. Once more it was a certain slowness to act, a tendency to look upon the world as a spectacle, rather than actual moral condemnation that "prevented him from becoming oblivious of his duties". In the end the girl announced that she was with child, and the affair threatened to take an unpleasant turn. Young Cats was very upset. "From that time I could not bear the sight of a white cap, and ceased altogether to find women attractive. It was as though Heaven were punishing us; yet, it was a blessing in disguise." He began to work very hard, and passed some examinations, though he did not graduate. He proceeded to Orleans where he read law and took his doctorate. But he had not finished with "the white caps". There were many young women to be visited for the sake of acquiring fluency in the French language, and with one of them he fell in love. The shock of his Leyden experience, however, had strengthened his natural tendency to look before he jumped. He told himself that marriages concluded while one is still at college are risky, and that no man should choose a wife "farther from home than he could drive a golf ball". He therefore left for Paris in a hurry and asked his family's permission to round off his tour with a visit to Tuscany. But everything south of the Alps was suspect to his calvinist relatives. They recalled him home. The return from France was made by ship. It was some time before 1600: the Southern Netherlands were hostile territory and could not be crossed.<sup>1</sup>

Cats settled at The Hague where he was called to the bar. He was a Zeeland subject, but his province and Holland shared certain higher juridical instances, and an ambitious young Zeelander could easily make a career in the richer province. Cats was assiduous at the sessions of the court of Holland and of the high council, observed the methods of the successful and established pleaders, "and sucked the marrow out of many cases". When at last he began to practise on his own the towns of Brouwershaven and of Zierikzee, with true regional patriotism, put all the business they could in the way of the

<sup>1</sup> The chronology of the early period of Cats's life is vague. No date is given with his entry in the register of students of Leyden university or with his registration at the bar. Various dates have been assigned to the witch process which is such an important event in his career.

young regent's son. He was already making a reputation for himself when a woman of the isle of Goeree asked him to undertake her defence against an accusation of witchcraft. He accepted the brief, although the journey to this South Holland isle was slow and cumbersome. The case, which he won, was one of a series: a witch-hunt was on. But Cats's eloquent and learned plea, and the publicity it achieved, put an end to the revival of this particular superstition.

A few years later, in 1609, Dutch readers were given an opportunity of acquainting themselves with an English book that had not been too successful in the country of its origin. It was Reginald Scott's *Discovery of Witchcraft*. The Dutch were readier than the English to peruse with sympathy an attack on nefarious fancies which threatened the life of innocuous old women: many of them were doubters, and the regents in particular were highly sceptical. The book encouraged its enlightened readers, and they were able to prevent the burning of witches and to abolish this perversion a century before other countries followed suit. Our old friend Voetius was not pleased with this development. Writing about 1650 he pointed to the fact that there were Roman catholics among those responsible for it. He and the calvinist ministers in general continued to believe that witchcraft was a reality, since it is mentioned a number of times in the bible.<sup>1</sup> The historian Fruin remarks that if no witches were burned in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century, while the puritan Commonwealth executed many, this is due, not to the fact that the Dutch Republic was calvinistic, but to the fact that the clergy had no power over those who governed the country.

Life was full of promise, and a successful career seemed open to Cats. He was seriously thinking of getting married, when he was attacked by recurring fevers which left him limp and unfit for work. His physician confessed that he could find no cure, and he decided to try a change of climate. He went to spend a summer in England where he visited "the two famous universities", learned the English language, attended the lectures of the Cambridge theologian Perkins, and consulted several doctors. The fever, however, refused to depart, and he returned home. At The Hague he came across an alchemist who was reputed to have changed tin into gold, and who gave him a reddish powder to drink in his wine. Cats prayed hard and swallowed the remedy. The powder may have been quinine, prayer may have helped or done the work by itself: the fever never reappeared. A fellow Zeelander advised Cats to go

<sup>1</sup> See Exodus, xxii, 18.

back to his native province where the climate might prevent a recurrence of his illness. The climate of Zeeland, though unkind to foreigners—witness the Spaniards in the 1570's and the British in 1809—seems to agree with its natives. It certainly agreed with Cats, who remained immune.

Cats chose Middelburg as his residence because at that time there was much work for a young barrister in this busy commercial town. Middelburg, a centre for shipping and the East India trade, was enjoying a boom as the result of the bottling up of Antwerp. Moreover it was the home town of many privateers whose pursuits it was often difficult to distinguish in practice from piracy. Disputes which arose constantly between the crews and the owners of ships that had captured a prize kept the courts busy. While working hard Cats found time to extend the circle of his acquaintances. "My house received many visits, even from statesmen", he says, "and men wiser than myself came to seek my advice." He became friendly with several theologians of a mystical and non-confessional turn of mind who exercised a considerable influence upon his religious outlook. But he felt increasingly lonely, and thoughts of marriage began to haunt him once again. At last he met his love, and the story deserves to be told in his own words.

"One day, at Middelburg", he says, in his autobiographical poem, "I entered the Walloon church, and went through a most wonderful experience. While listening to the sermon I saw a young maiden, and forthwith in my heart the fire of love was kindled. She appeared wonderfully beautiful and most sweet to me. I felt a fire running through my blood. The moment I left the church I made enquiries to find where this young lady was living, and I wrote her at once a fine love letter, which I sent to my newly chosen dear, praying her to be at her doorstep in the evening after supper, because I was desirous of seeing her then, and wished to come and offer her my fond service. The young lady acted precisely as I had written and came to her door at the appointed time. It is strange what joy I experienced upon seeing her! It seemed to me as though heaven were opening before my soul. I produced none but velvety words, embroidered all over with gold and silken cords. To put it in one word, I honoured her then and there with everything the study of literature had taught me. She, her face coloured with a modest blush, looked upon me favourably, but without speaking a word. Yet before parting from her I had found out enough to make my visit worth my while. Later, I went to greet her in greater earnestness and found that she returned my love in every respect, so that I

was beginning to hope that I might win her, first as a heart to be loved, and then as a companion for life."

"I told a certain friend of my intention", continues Cats, "and informed him that I was making ready very thoroughly for the conjugal state. But this man advised me altogether against it, and said: 'This marriage will not serve your affairs. You must keep your name altogether blameless in this town, which by these means you could never achieve. The father of the girl who has become so impressed upon your mind is despised here at the Exchange. He is a bankrupt'. No need to ask me what effect these words had upon me. It seemed as though I were listening to a succession of thunder-claps. This was because the maiden had penetrated deep into my erring soul and pleased me infinitely. I experienced a great struggle in my saddened mind. I was quite appalled and uncertain what to undertake. Her image was constant in my mind and pressed me vigorously. But see what happened: her father's downfall drove her out. I was so favourably disposed towards this maiden, and it seemed to me that her face alone was enough to make me happy. For her sake, even without its being particularly necessary, I would gladly have given up my life. But see how the mischance which overcame her father deprived me entirely of her love. Although not without a struggle, I tried to liberate myself from the burning fire of love. I meditated much upon my case, not only by day but often throughout the night. It happened that the young girl had to go to Amsterdam and this gave me a chance to take my leave. Upon her departure I dared not speak as I used. The hottest part of love had already vanished. O what is the fate of man and what are the things he undertakes! How soon a thing falls away that one was wont to love!" Cats was nothing if not frank. And yet, it was the story of many a regent's son. We may be sure, however, that the ordinary citizen, who did not look upon himself as a man with genealogical responsibilities, was readier to listen to the promptings of his heart.

Marriage came a little later, and in telling us the story Cats becomes unusually reticent. "When I neither sought it nor thought of it, God gave me a dear wife." He tells us that her favourite reading was the bible, that she was bright and pleasantly mannered. She had another virtue, which Cats does not mention—she was an heiress. The marriage was celebrated in April 1605. Seven children were born of the marriage, but twenty years later only two of them, both daughters, were alive. Until his marriage Cats, though a protestant, had kept free from confessional attachments:

we saw him worshipping in the Walloon church. His wife pressed him to join the Dutch Reformed church. The days of the "libertines", those liberal humanist regents who were little more than deists, were passing. Calvinism, in search of ecclesiastical respectability, made sterner demands upon the ruling classes. Interest bade Cats follow his wife's advice. He soon was made an elder in the church which offered some access to political preferment.

When the truce with Spain was concluded in 1609 privateering came to an end and with it the most remunerative branch of litigation. Moreover, as we know, the banking and commercial activities lost by Antwerp resumed their northward migration and were captured by Amsterdam. Zeeland's trade boom was over. Cats left the bar and, in 1611, he launched into the business of land reclamation, which, a generation later, became a fashionable pursuit for regents in search of an investment. In partnership with his brother he bought lands that had been flooded in the course of warlike operations in the western half of Zeeland Flanders. It was generally believed that the truce would not run the full course of twelve years; few people dared to risk the money required for reclaiming the "drowned" lands, whose owners sold their claims for a song. The business had its ups and downs. Often large tracts of land, already restored to cultivation, were overrun once more. Nevertheless the balance was highly favourable. Meanwhile, Cats was dividing his time between the works in Zeeland Flanders and his recently acquired country estate in the neighbourhood of Middelburg. He lived a rural existence, frequently "subsisting on vegetables only", reading and versifying. It is at this time that he wrote a number of his idylls and some of his didactic poems on love and marriage. He published several of these works and by the end of the truce he was looked upon as the leading poet of Zeeland.

In 1621 the truce came to an end and land reclamation ceased to be profitable. New inundations were required for military purposes, some of the recent reclamations were lost, and the owners received no compensation. Visions of greater wealth evaporated. Always ready to moralise, Cats reflected that it was more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. "Gold", he meditated, "is beautiful to behold, but it is exceedingly heavy and involves its owners in great dangers". Worse befell him and taxes were demanded from Cats on the profits made by reclamation even for those fields and polders which had since been flooded for military reasons. This involved extensive litigation at The Hague, where three courts in succession



dealt with his case. He began to regret the day when he had given up his professional career. Just at this time he was asked to take a chair of law in the university of Leyden. While he was seriously considering the proposition the town of Middelburg offered him the post of pensionary. He gave the preference to administration and was supported in this decision by his wife who was very fond of Middelburg. The work was hard. The pensionary of the capital of an important province was concerned with more than local affairs. The other towns frequently consulted him. Although the intervention of prince Maurice had secured the triumph of the counter-remonstrants, peace had by no means returned to the church. And though he was naturally a supporter of the stadtholderly régime, Cats's natural bent, which was all for compromise, enabled him to contribute greatly to the pacification of the disturbed minds of his compatriots.

Cats was not allowed to stay at Middelburg very long. Dordrecht, the senior town of Holland, invited him to become its pensionary. He insists that this offer was not due to any steps taken by himself or by his friends. The messenger who brought the flattering invitation found him seated in the midst of his books. He hesitated for a long time. He loved his own province, he was loath to move, and his wife disliked the change. "I had a house in town and, in the country, a well-constructed dwelling with orchards neatly planted. I had numerous friends and life was what I wanted it to be. At Dordrecht I had no acquaintances. My children were born at Middelburg and would lose the right of citizenship acquired by their birth." He consulted "respectable people" and even theologians. They expressed the view that the call came from God, and assured him that God would turn into a blessing that which he now feared, and that the heavy burden which was to be placed upon his shoulders would soon enable him to reach out for better things. The advice of his friends determined him to take the decision to which ambition inclined him. He settled at Dordrecht in 1623 and remained pensionary of this town for thirteen years.

Jacob Cats clearly was a sound administrator and a good financier, but not a great statesman. He belonged *ex-officio* to the delegation sent to the States of Holland by his town, and in this capacity he was concerned with the country's foreign policy. In March 1627 he was a member of a mission sent by the Republic to Charles I to discuss the trade difficulties that had arisen between the two countries. The mission remained in England till the end of August. The ceremonial of the court greatly impressed the Zeeland

poet. "Milord Buckingham", he tells us, "had to deal with our business. This prince was in those days in favour with the king and he used the court as though it were his own house. Anything he requested from the king was granted at once and without difficulty. But hear what a strange affair happened to us while we were pursuing our business. I think it is a thing worth mentioning, and this is why I am describing this festivity. Upon St. George's Day a feast was held, to which guests were bidden, and in particular there were courtly ladies who were invited to witness the royal celebration. The nobility entered the room and displayed their proud mien and their well-shaped limbs. All this took place to the measure of the sound of noble chords, which mightily pleased the young women present. In the name of the king we were conducted to excellent seats, from which we could look down upon this courtly and splendid display. With us was an ambassador from Venice who, at the king's wish, took his place by our side. There were three of us in a window from which we were able to see the whole ceremony. All the nobility were walking up and down and Milord Buckingham kept passing to and fro. Whenever this lord came nigh our window his face brightened visibly. He made a wonderfully low bow and gave the sweetest of smiles. Yes, whenever he looked up he was transfixed. We felt greatly honoured by this mark of favour and were full of praise at his politeness. We considered that in our persons honour was paid to our country. But soon our feelings became different, for when we descended into the room we discovered that the affair had a very different complexion. Neither our Netherlands nor wealthy Venice was concerned. Above the place allotted to us sat a number of ladies who enjoyed the view but took greater pleasure still in displaying themselves. Now Milord, who was a hero with these young women, was celebrating not only the feast of St. George but also that of Venus!" The Dutch delegation achieved little, apart from a few minor concessions. But to his indescribable pleasure, Cats was presented by the king with "a letter, a letter of nobility, the characters of which shone with gold and lovely paint, and to which was added a coat of arms".

While in England, Cats was frequently invited to the country houses of well-known people. A few years earlier a Zeelander called Vermuyden had launched a scheme of land reclamation in Lincolnshire. His enterprise excited much attention in England and when it became known that Cats himself had been engaged in work of a similar nature many of his new acquaintances advised him to try his luck in England. He was told that particularly fertile land could

he won from the sea and that numerous people would be glad to invest if experts gave them a lead. But the new enterprise was disappointing. "I have learned that to surround land with dykes in foreign realms is a dangerous undertaking. One does not know the people. One knows neither those who favour one nor those who work against one. One is not clear about a number of uncomfortable and troublesome affairs. To make dykes is at best an uncertain chance, but this applies particularly to dykes one builds abroad." Someone was dishonest on this occasion and it has been suggested that Cats himself was not over-scrupulous.

In 1630 while he was still pensionary of Dordrecht Cats lost his wife, "my worthy bedfellow, my delight and second soul". She died after a lingering illness of twenty months. Cats seriously considered getting married again, and his friends advised him to attempt another venture. But in the end he decided that fifty-three was too old for a second wedding. To marry a woman of his own age did not attract him: he did not want a wife with wrinkles, "while I looked upon myself as too ripe to frolic with a youngster". He decided therefore "to live for himself and to sleep without a wife". In 1633 his manservant married a juffrouw Havius, who became his housekeeper. She remained with Cats after her husband's death.

Cats had not yet reached the culmination of his career. "You know it, O God, I did not seek this and it came to me silently, as it were", he said in his autobiography when relating his promotion. The grand pensionary of Holland died in 1629. As pensionary of the premier town of the province Cats had to take over the grand pensionary's work till another appointment was made. He was looked upon as a serious candidate for the post, but objections were raised because he was not a subject of Holland. The pensionary who was appointed in the spring of 1631 resigned at the end of his five years' term, and this time, by the unanimous vote of the States of Holland, Cats was given the office. "The state gave me power to initiate its business and to count the votes after every member had expressed his view. Thus, for the service of the country, it was left to me to express the sense of the gathering".

The statesmanship of Cats has often been criticised. There is no doubt that he was not one of those ruthless and tough regents who rode roughshod over opposition, knew what they wanted, and got it. He was the first to admit his shortcomings. Again and again one comes across passages in his memoirs in which he wonders at the strange ways of God who deigned to raise him, a simple son of a

small Zeeland town, to the highest office in the Republic. He certainly was an undistinguished servant of the state. But there must after all have been some reason for his being made pensionary of Middelburg, no mean office, and pensionary of Dordrecht, which was a key position. As for the final promotion, let us remember that it made him the most important personage in the whole Republic after the prince of Orange. It may be that Cats was less mediocre than the men of his generation, and it is a fact that men who flourished between the age of Oldenbarnevelt and that of John De Witt were of a lesser stature than their predecessors and than the men who came after them. Nevertheless, although the Middelburg appointment was made by men who had seen Cats at work and knew his merits, his career in Holland may have been due to considerations other than a mere appreciation of his administrative and financial ability. "See, once I had entered the service of Holland, I never held preliminary discussions with any of its members", he says. He had connections neither with the deputies of the nobility nor with those of any of the voting towns. He continues: "Nor had I any friend who was related to me by blood and who, if the need arose, could speak for me". This was the real secret. At a period when nepotism and "contracts of correspondence" were spreading, though they had not yet become so universal that everyone noticed the evil, Jacob Cats stood alone, representing no sectional interest and no party. He was an orangist, but of the kind that was not obnoxious to the States party, as is seen by the fact that he continued in office after the death of William II. He never denied his affection for the house of Orange nor made a secret of it. In his unassuming way he was a patriot, he inspired confidence and was found useful by both parties.

Cats was *persona grata* with Frederic Henry, without whose approval he could not have been appointed. The stadtholder would not have allowed a strong personality to occupy the grand pensionary's seat. But it would be a mistake to look upon Cats solely as the creature and instrument of the stadtholder. During the last years of Frederic Henry's life peace negotiations were opened with Spain, much against the prince's wish. The States of Holland were the most active promoters of these negotiations, and Cats was their chief officer. He was seventy when the prince died, and the new stadtholder, William II, was as strongly opposed to the peace as his father. Yet the treaty of Munster was signed within a year. We have seen how William II then embarked upon his brief attempt to break the States party and to seize for himself the

monopoly of foreign policy. Cats describes the coup d'Etat of 1650 and the passive part he played in it. "It was a Saturday, O Holland, when your States were foregathered in their modest meeting place. Just as I was ready to open the business which I deemed it appropriate to place before the States, but before I had actually begun to speak, I was summoned by the prince. I went, as requested, and what happened then I could not have foreseen. I found the prince, not in his usual condition, and his face, I thought, revealed strange preoccupations. He came close to me and addressed me in these terms, 'I have, after due consideration, and for a number of reasons, arrested several of your members. They are now, by my order, in safe custody, but quite well in every respect. Moreover, I have ordered a number of swift soldiers to attack Amsterdam by force of arms. As for you, note what I say, go to the States and tell them my story'. I stood amazed, as though I witnessed a rare wonder; my brain reeled, as if I had heard a mighty thunderclap. Nevertheless I was able to ask to what these unhappy events were due. . . . The prince fetched paper and ink and wrote down the names of those who had been arrested and the main points that had to be communicated to the States of Holland." Cats returned to the Assembly and made his report, whereupon the deputies hastened to disperse. The failure of the coup against Amsterdam is told by Cats in the same vein of other-worldliness. It is as though he looked upon these great events with the eyes of the young man who witnessed the amours of his fellow-students without taking part in them, and indeed, without understanding them.

In the Grand Assembly of 1651 Cats played a leading part. The results, he tells us, were not due to his wisdom, but to God's fatherly kindness. When the work of the convention was at an end he tendered his resignation, which was accepted. Within a few months, however, he was sent to England at the head of a deputation. It was still in 1651, relations between the two republics were tense, and the delegates were instructed to negotiate a treaty with England. Cats was nearly seventy-four and trembled at the thought of the sea journey and a sojourn in a foreign country. But the sea treated him kindly, though two sailors died of the plague during the short crossing. According to the custom of the day the delegates carried with them rich presents consisting of beautifully chiselled golden cups in precious caskets. But under the new régime English statesmen and officials were forbidden to accept presents. Cats made an eloquent and lengthy speech in Latin at

the bar of the house of commons and another before the council of state. For seven days the deputies were guests of state, after which they were left to make their own arrangements. "Our house and household, the rooms, the walls, the streets themselves were different from those we left behind in Holland. Listen to my words, o friends. Those who wish to be well received, I advise them strongly never to wander away from our own towns." Moreover, the populace was most unfriendly and stuck offensive lampoons on the door of the delegates' lodgings, even in broad daylight. In the end the deputies moved out of London. "Following the good advice of a distinguished man, we went to a certain village not far from London and there we found a fine dwelling entirely to our taste." It was the village of "Chelsi", as the Dutch called it. "The Lord of Buckingham used to live and to display his great power in this fine building. Water like crystal descended from above and was collected in leaden receptacles which distributed it in every direction through the big house. The Thames rolled its full waves in front of our house and gave us salmon and roach, the air appeared salubrious and less harsh than in our own country. On April 8th I noticed a vine with some leaf and many buds, and a fig tree which bore the harbingers of fruit. Almost every house has a park like a wood, full of wild and domestic animals. The walls are covered with rosemary which actually survives in winter, while the bay tree is as green as our willows and other common trees."

While he was still in England Cats sent instructions to Holland for the building of a country house similar to that in which he was staying. Some ten years earlier he had bought a piece of sandy soil in the dunes between The Hague and Scheveningen. There he continued his experiments in land reclamation, and fine trees were already growing where once there was only the coarse grass of the dunes. As soon as the house of *Sorgoliet* was ready, he took his library to this rustic retreat, and lived happily writing verse under the tender care of juffrouw Havius. A complete edition of his works appeared before his death, and he lived long enough to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing his influence extend not only to Flanders, but even to Germany, where he had many admirers. Visitors were numerous and the most welcome among them were liberal theologians. One winter's morning the dowager princess of Orange came to see him. She spent the whole day at *Sorgoliet* while the young prince William III played with a sleigh on the ice. The daughter of juffrouw Havius delighted the old statesman by singing French songs to the accompaniment of the lute played by her brother who was a student.

In his own student days Cats had begun to keep an autograph album in which his friends and the celebrities he met in the course of his journeys were asked to write contributions. He now spent many happy hours meditating upon the career of those whose contributions he had collected.

In a poem addressed to his nephew Thisius, professor and rector magnificus of the university of Leyden,<sup>1</sup> Cats described the delights of country life. "I have dunes of my own which are contiguous with my grounds. There many a wild rabbit can be found at any time and although I have rented the fields to someone else my friends are allowed to hunt in them. They go out with the net or with swift dogs. I also have a pond which holds fat bream and other good fish, and there is a little punt with which one can navigate these waters. I gladly allow my guests to catch the fish with the net or with the rod. But when we go to the sea shore at the right tide we make an even better catch. A horse pulls a dragnet and we fill baskets with fish, among which we sometimes find a well-fed salmon. The young people have no time for drinking. Instead, they spread their nets and catch finches." Cats describes how these birds, and titmice, partridge and thrushes, were caught, killed and plucked, sometimes to the number of two hundred in one day, and turned into dishes that were prepared with various sauces for the delectation of the guests. He did not partake of these delicacies. His preference had always been for the fruits of his own trees and the vegetables grown in his own garden.

Thus lived Jacob Cats, meditating upon life and upon his own past, a happy spectator of the enjoyments of the younger generation, pouring out advice to his last breath, readier every day for the final journey when the call should come. He died on September 12th, 1660, at the age of nearly 83.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER IX

#### A BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER

TO end this survey of the commonwealth of merchants I shall tell the story of a strange love affair which is to be found in old pamphlets of the days of John De Witt, Pieter De la Court and Jacob Cats. It shows the Holland regent in daily life, with all

<sup>1</sup> For a peevish and ununderstanding criticism of Cats as a man and a writer see Prinsen in his *Handboek tot de Nederlandsche Letterkundige Geschiedenis*.

his strength and all his weakness, and illustrates the working of the political, religious and legal institutions of the Dutch Republic at the time of the first stadtholderless period. Its background is the Delft of Jan Vermeer.

Delft was a prosperous town with the largest population in Holland after Amsterdam, Leyden and Haarlem. Beer-brewing used to be its main industry, but by the middle of the seventeenth century the number of its breweries had much diminished, and the weaving of woollen cloth had become the principal occupation of its inhabitants. Next to it came the manufacture of the famous Delft earthenware, blue or multicoloured, for which clay was fetched from Tournay and from Mulheim, and mixed with earth found in the town itself. In a country famed for its cleanliness Delft had the reputation of being the cleanest of all towns. Its canals, proportionately more numerous than those of Amsterdam, were filled with water that was regularly renewed and that provided the housewives with all they required for the ritual ablutions of the domestic cult. Along these canals glided the barges that collected the household refuse from bins arrayed along the waterside. The painters of the school of Delft were not exaggerating when they showed us a town so tidy that it seemed a little lifeless. The vision of Delft conjured up by Jan Vermeer transmutes matter into something that ceases to be tangible and is detached from time. But then, as I have pointed out before, Dutch painting is by no means realistic. Vermeer's alchemy also performed another marvel: it lent a patrician dignity to middle-class existence. In doing this Vermeer gave body to the dream of his fellow-citizens. They liked to call themselves the most courteous people in Holland, and attributed this rare quality to the fact that so many among them were descended from Brabant emigrants.

One of the most powerful oligarchs of the proud town of Delft was Geraldo Welhoek, *alias* Briell. He was the son of Cornelis Welhoek, the first of the family whose name appears in the lists of Delft regents. Cornelis, who may have come from the Southern Netherlands, was co-opted into the "forty" or "broad council" of Delft in 1595. He was in office a number of times, mostly in a subordinate capacity. In 1597 he was treasurer, in 1601 alderman, in 1602 one of the wardens of the orphans, in 1604 treasurer and in 1608 and 1609 once more warden of the orphans. He was also regent or administrator of various charities. He died in 1610. His son Geraldo, or Gerard, was born in 1593. We know nothing about his early years. It is probable, however, that he went to the



excellent Latin school of Delft, and we are told that he had read "a number of good authors and historians". He does not appear to have been in business: he belonged to the first generation of regents who lived on their income and on their directors' fees, and who specialised in their task of administration.

At the age of 29 Geraldo Welhoek was made a regent of the old hospital and was elected to the broad council. The following year, in 1623, he was made an alderman. He occupied this office for three consecutive years. During his last year of office he became a member of the board of several charitable institutions, and a director of the Delft chamber of the East India Company. There followed five years spent outside public office, broken only by the exercise of the subordinate function of treasurer in 1628. A regent was, of course, never assured of active employment. He remained a member of the broad council, which met now and then to discuss public affairs with those of its members who were in office. But to be in office he had to be placed by his colleagues upon the double list from which the stadtholder selected the names of the officers for the coming year. Younger members of the council had naturally less chance of appearing on this list, because they had not yet acquired sufficient influence to make their choice inevitable. From 1632 to 1636 Geraldo was an alderman once more, then he served a year as warden of the orphans and a year as treasurer. After two years out of office, at the age of 46, he achieved the highest ambition of an urban regent: he was elected one of the four burgomasters. He was re-elected the following year. In 1642 and 1643 he was warden of the orphans, and from 1644 to 1648 he was one of the deputies of Delft to the States of Holland. During the last three years of this period he was also treasurer of the town.

The four years spent as deputy of the town to the States of Holland, an office which, as we have seen, was looked upon as only moderately attractive by most regents, were rewarded by four consecutive years as burgomaster. These years, from 1648 to 1652, covered the important period of the Peace of Munster, the coup d'Etat of William II, and the inauguration of the stadtholderless régime. Geraldo Welhoek contrived to remain in the saddle under both dispensations. He had been elected to the broad council in the first instance only a few years after the coup d'Etat of prince Maurice, when the orangist reaction was at its height. It is clear that he was no extreme party man. He was an administrator first and foremost, although he must have welcomed the stadtholderless régime because it made his caste even more powerful than before.

He certainly shared the views of the members of the States party about the supremacy of the state over the church, and he showed his pride of caste by erecting a magnificent tomb for himself, his deceased wife and his second wife in the Old Church, next to the monument of admiral Tromp. At the age of 27 Geraldo married Maria van Loedensteyn, the daughter of a family of Delft regents. She died four years later, and in 1627, when he was 34, he married Pieterella Spiering, of Amsterdam, who was then eighteen years of age. Two daughters were born of this marriage.

Towards the end of 1653 the calvinist community of Delft invited Arnoldus Bornius to become one of its six ministers. Bornius was the son of a calvinist minister from Cambray. He studied theology at Leyden, went on a journey through France, and became a minister of religion. He married a minister's daughter, who died while he was resident at Woerden. She left him three children. Bornius was the brother of the Leyden professor whose unrestrained polemical writings we have noted in a previous chapter. Unlike his brother, he was a moderate and somewhat timorous man. He was repeatedly delegated by his consistory to the colloquy or *classis* for the southern half of the province of Holland.

When he arrived at Delft in November 1653 Bornius went to pay his respects to the local magnate Geraldo Welhoek, who had reached the age of 60 and was spending two years out of office. He had made his acquaintance a few years earlier, at the colloquy for South Holland, where Welhoek was present as political commissary for ecclesiastical affairs. The commissary's function was to hold a watching brief on behalf of the civil authorities. Bornius and Welhoek were able on this occasion to settle a local church dispute which threatened to acquire undue proportions. Bornius had two good reasons for trying to be on friendly terms with Welhoek, who was an elder of the church as well as a member of the town council which paid the ministers' salaries. The burgomaster—for even when not in office the regents who had occupied the highest office in their town were usually addressed by this courtesy title—received Bornius with all the respect due to his cloth. But he was a busy man, and the women of the house were called in to entertain the visitor. Juffrouw Welhoek—the title of *mevrouw* was still strictly reserved to members of the nobility—was favourably impressed by the new *domine*, and so were her two daughters. He spoke beautifully, and expressed touching sentiments about man's awareness of God's grace. The ladies asked him to call again.

Soon Arnoldus Bornius was an habitué of the house. He

explained the mysteries of the holy reformed religion to his sympathetic and admiring feminine audience, led them in impromptu prayer, or would listen to the reflections of juffrouw Welhoek who paraphrased his teaching for the benefit of her daughters in simple and well-chosen words. Sometimes the minister talked about himself. He spoke about the wife he had so recently lost, about his three motherless children, and perhaps, also, about his loneliness. After a while he noticed that in this little conventicle the most attentive of his listeners was Agatha, one of the Welhoek daughters, who was sixteen years of age at the time his visits began. She looked at him with large eyes, and drank in his words. By and by she also began to ask questions and to talk, and gradually the minister turned to her rather than to her sister and her mother, and felt that he was speaking for her alone. Between them an unspoken understanding was growing.

In his study the minister recalled every detail of his latest visit. He admired the young girl's sagacity, and reflected that her approach to the problems of religion and life was the same as his own, and that there was between them a community of temper and inclinations. Meditating upon the ways of Providence, he wondered whether it could be pure chance that had led him to the house of this girl. Would she not be a splendid mother for his children, one who would bring them up in the ways of piety and wisdom? The more he prayed, the surer he became that he loved Agatha, that she loved him, and that she was destined to become his wife. There were many difficulties, not the least of which was the difference in their ages. He was twenty-three years older than the girl, she was an heiress, and he a widower with three children and no fortune. But he remembered that many wise authors considered it a good thing that a husband should be older than his wife, and that the burgomaster himself was senior to juffrouw Welhoek by sixteen years. His children would give Agatha more happiness than trouble, and their gratitude would amply repay her for the care she would bestow upon them. The difference in fortune mattered less than might appear at first sight, because Bornius knew in his heart that worldly goods were as nothing to him. He wanted to give every conceivable guarantee that Agatha's inheritance would remain untouched by him, and would go after her death to her own children and not to his. At the same time Bornius frankly admitted to himself that an alliance with the house of Welhoek would bring to him and to his children "honour and consideration with the finest people of the town".

The edifying meetings, the unspoken romance and the day-dreams went on for more than two years. Bornius and Agatha were never alone together. Even the most perfect intuitive understanding, however, likes occasionally to feed upon a few whispered banalities. At last Bornius plucked up his courage and began to compose a letter to his beloved. He wrote as one who is revealing no secret, related the story of their meeting and their gradual discovery of one another, and, with disarming frankness, he enumerated under three headings the reasons in favour of their marriage and those against it. He ended by asking his beloved to reflect carefully upon his proposal, to discuss it with her parents if it were agreeable to herself, but, most of all, to pray God for guidance. He added that he would cease his visits until she had reached a decision. He also asked that, if his suit did not meet with the approval of Agatha or her parents, the whole matter might remain a secret, to avoid "the hostile judgment and the talk of the ill-intentioned". Unless this were done, it would only lead to his being "tormented and the subject of conversations, which is never to the advantage of honest people". Having made a careful copy of the letter, he had it delivered to Agatha on August 1st, 1655.

The letter from Bornius found Agatha neither unwilling nor unprepared. There was no need for her to search her heart. She wanted to marry her minister, and set to work to gain her parents' consent. She first approached her mother, who allowed herself to be talked over after some resistance. Her father, however, would not hear of the marriage. A minister who was poor, middle-aged and a widower with children was unworthy of his daughter. This bold proposal must have been inspired by ambition and covetousness. Welhoek had more than the average share of the regents' pride of caste. He was domineering and short tempered, he was used to being feared and obeyed. He had been made a burgomaster once more, and was in the first year of a period of office that was to last till the end of 1658. He forbade his daughter ever to mention the subject again. But Agatha was a true daughter of her father. She returned to the subject every day, at every meal. She spoke of nothing else. The Welhoek home was the scene of continual outbursts and quarrels. At last the burgomaster entirely lost control of himself, and cried out to his wife and to Agatha: "I swear upon the eternal salvation of my soul that as long as my eyes are open I shall never consent to this marriage!" Thereupon he lifted his hands to heaven and prayed God not to have mercy on his

soul if he ever gave his consent. "And now I don't see how things will ever get right", said Agatha.

Henceforth the whole affair pivoted round the burgomaster's oath and his conscience. Agatha went to see Bornius, and the frightened cleric told her that the wisest course was to submit. The girl, who was now eighteen years old, took a different view. There was no question of submitting, she said: Their one course of action was to make her father realise that his crazy oath was not binding. Bornius must mobilise his clerical friends for a campaign to set the burgomaster's conscience at ease. She would see to it that in her father's own circle pressure was brought to bear to make him see reason. Agatha bestirred herself with all her youthful energy. She made the reluctant Bornius preach a sermon on the validity of oaths, she wrote to theologians to consult them on the subject and spurred on the patricians of the town to call on her father and to talk things over with him. It was all in vain. "I have sworn", said Welhoek, "and I must keep my oath." At home he continued to threaten and to shout, and he told Agatha that he would make a new will and leave her out of it. Agatha was seized with tremblings and palpitations, and took to her bed.

Father and daughter were at one only in their total disregard for Bornius's advice to keep the matter secret. Welhoek went about saying that Bornius had been making love to his daughter under the pretence of teaching her the catechism, and that he was unworthy of being a minister of God. Delft divided itself into two parties, and one after the other the regents who had at first tried to support Agatha quailed before the impetuous burgomaster and ceased to interfere. The pastor of the Walloon church, Solers, preached a sermon on the duties of children towards their parents, in which he said that Bornius deserved to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied to his neck. It was a manner of touting for influential parishioners. On the whole, the members of the Dutch Reformed church sided with Bornius, and the two camps tended to sort themselves out on established party lines.

After more than two years of strife the lovers thought that they had found a way out. The law of Holland allowed no marriage to take place without the consent of the parents of both parties regardless of age. But it allowed the bench of a town to set aside the objection of the parents. Agatha and Bornius decided to notify the commissioners for marriage of their intention to be married. Welhoek would then either let the matter go by default, or, if his conscience dictated such a step, register a formal objection. The

lovers could then appear before the bench of aldermen and ask them to override the father's objection.

In October 1657 Bornius and Agatha appeared before the commissioners for marriage and gave their notification. Welhoek answered it with an unexpected counter-move. He wrote to the consistory of the Dutch reformed community at Delft that he wished to give up his membership and join the Walloon church. The Walloon church had an organisation of its own, but it was orthodox calvinist and differed from the Dutch reformed church only in the language of its services. It followed the practice of the established church in accepting no communicants unless they handed in a certificate of orthodoxy and good conduct delivered by the consistory of the parish they had left. This method was really intended for people who had to change their domicile. In asking the Dutch reformed community to give him his certificate Welhoek stated that he wished to transfer because the minister Bornius had given notice of his intention to marry his daughter Agatha. The consistory decided to defer the matter of the certificate, and appointed a committee of two ministers who were to talk the matter over with Welhoek in a conciliatory manner. The ministers had several meetings with the burgomaster, who admitted that he often made himself so angry that he was afraid of an apoplectic stroke. "And that is the very thing they hope will happen", he told them. If he were an ancient Roman, he said, he would sell his daughter in the market-place as a slave. He asked that Bornius should be censured and suspended, and confessed that he felt such a strong aversion to the man, that he could never be reconciled with him. The ministers were to tell their colleague that he was a scamp, a good-for-nothing, and a scoundrel. The two deputies went to Bornius, who gave them his word that his courtship had been perfectly honourable. He also said that he still had hopes of an amicable settlement. The deputies now reported to the consistory, which declared that it regretted the attitude adopted by Welhoek. Meanwhile Agatha applied to the bench of aldermen for permission to get married and wrote to them urging them to hasten their decision.

The two ministers from the consistory continued to call on the burgomaster. At the request of Bornius they explained to him that his oath was invalid because it had been taken when he was beside himself with anger. They achieved nothing. He remained obdurate and repeated that he was going to join the Walloon church. In the meantime, he said, the consistory would be well advised to be guarded about what it put down in its minutes. He was obvi-

ously annoyed because, far from censuring Bornius, the ministers, elders and deacons had expressed their disapproval of his own conduct. Unable to obtain satisfaction from the church, Welhoek appeared before the bench of aldermen, his junior colleagues, and demanded that Bornius should be summoned before them on the ground that he had accused the burgomaster of slandering him. Bornius was duly visited by the senior town messenger carrying his rod of office, and was handed a summons stating that he would have to start an action for slander against the burgomaster, or else hold his peace forever after. Bornius appeared before the bench and declared, through his lawyer, meester Hucq, that he had indeed been informed of many things said to his disadvantage by burgomaster Welhoek, but that, owing to the respect he felt for him, and in order not to create further enmity, he declined to take proceedings against him. This did not satisfy the burgomaster, who demanded that Bornius should be compelled to start proceedings against him within six weeks.

Thus ended the year 1657. Agatha was once more ill with worry. This may explain a certain vacillation in her attitude during the early months of the year 1658. The three leading characters of the drama were heartily sick of the whole affair, and were all, in their different manner and in varying degrees, craving for a compromise. The ecclesiastical dispute was running its course concurrently with the legal proceedings. A few days after the new year the Dutch reformed consistory repeated its refusal to provide Welhoek with an attestation. Thereupon the Walloon church decided to admit him without this certificate, although he was not to take holy communion as long as the "war" with Bornius lasted.

The committee of ministers meanwhile continued its attempts to effect a reconciliation between the parties. Bornius was frightened and tired, and at his request they asked Agatha to suspend the proceedings she had started before the bench in order to obtain permission for the marriage. Agatha began by replying that she had "weighty reasons" for rejecting this advice, but after a while she gave way. She made two conditions, however. Her father was to give her permission to meet Bornius when she liked outside the parental home, and was to promise that he would make no changes in his will. With some difficulty Welhoek was persuaded to discuss the matter jointly with the ministers and his daughter. He stipulated, however, that the meeting should have the air of being accidental. At the first meeting little progress was made. Welhoek



cut it short by saying: "Why this insistence upon 'free conversation'? Is it not enough that I connive at it and do not prevent it? As for my will, I have no intention of changing it, provided the legal proceedings are suspended. But to bind myself by a promise and to have rules imposed upon me by my children,—that is more than I am willing to accept!" There were more conferences, and in the end the burgomaster's sensitive conscience was appeased. He promised to let his daughter meet Bornius undisturbed and undertook to insert nothing in his will to the detriment of Agatha or of Bornius. The addition of Bornius's name to this promise suggests that Welhoek had resigned himself to the fact that the marriage would take place as soon as he was dead. Agatha, on her side, obtained the adjournment *sine die* of her suit before the bench of aldermen.

During the three years that followed the peace treaty, Agatha was taken on three afternoons every week to the house of Bornius by one of her parents' maids, and fetched back in the evening. "In the course of these visits", she said afterwards, "I learned to know the temper of the reverend Bornius, his manner of running his home, and the kindness of his children so well, that I deem myself happy to stand in such a relationship to him". There was, of course, nothing unusual in these meetings between two lovers. The Dutch of the seventeenth century were not prudish and allowed the greatest latitude to courting couples. After some time, however, Agatha found it impossible to abide by the spirit of the standstill agreement. She resumed her campaign and moved heaven and earth to beat down her father's determination. She called on a number of regents, and found them readier to listen to her, now that her father was once more out of office. She gained the support of several burgomasters, and persuaded them to send the pensionary of the town to plead her cause with her father. Once more a succession of lawyers and theologians invaded the Welhoek home and besieged Geraldo with their arguments. Meanwhile pamphlets pleading the cause of the lovers or defending the rights of parents appeared in Delft and even in other towns, and letters written by Agatha and by Bornius were published.

Geraldo Welhoek remained impervious to all argument. He had reached the age of sixty-eight, and his temper was growing more choleric every day. Once more his home was filled with quarrels and angry voices. His wife had now entirely come round to his opinion, and together they made Agatha's life as difficult as she made theirs. Shortly before the communion service was to be held



Agatha came home one day from a visit to Bornius, and her mother greeted her with the words: "So this is how you prepare for holy supper?" This was followed by more unpleasantness and Agatha was upset for a whole week. Her mother exclaimed to the maids: "That my own child should inflict this upon me!" Another day—it was in March 1661—Welhoek worked himself into such a rage that he called Agatha "an accursed daughter", and shouted at her the curse of Deuteronomy XXVII, 16: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother"! Agatha ran upstairs, but he followed her and repeated his imprecation. He said that he would know how to keep his daughter under control, and that he would lock her up, if need be. Meanwhile he told the two maids that they were not to take Agatha to her minister under pain of instant dismissal.

Once more Agatha took to her bed. When she came down again her father repeated his threat and ordered that the back door of the house and the garden gate should be permanently locked. Agatha went straight to her lawyer and instructed him to resume the legal proceedings for the setting aside of her father's objection to her marriage. Then she went to Bornius. As usual, the minister was torn between prudence and love. He tried to reassure the young woman, and persuaded her to return home. Within a few hours Welhoek knew that Agatha had broken the standstill agreement. The next day, while the family was having its evening meal, Welhoek said to his daughter: "You have tormented and bullied me for six years. Now you have again involved me in legal proceedings. I shall bring your suit before three judges, and I shall drag it on till one of us—you or I or Bornius—dies. So you need not have your shoes mended yet to go to your wedding. And if you marry him you won't get a doit for your dowry". Whereupon Agatha went to bed very sad, and cried and prayed all night.

The next day she went to church and to catechism. On coming home she found her father still in a rage. She began to tremble and said: "Father, I cannot bear these upsets any longer". He replied: "You will soon be feeling a great deal more upset, but that is nothing to me. I will not let you out of the house any more". So he shouted to the maids that they were to double-lock the front door at once and give him the key, while he went to lock the other entrances of the house himself. But while he was making for the back door Agatha slipped out by the front door, and escaped from the town.

At this point of the story, and for the first time, there is a conflict

of evidence. Welhoek asserted that his daughter had prepared every detail of her escape. Agatha said that she acted on the spur of the moment, without advice or assistance. When she heard her father's threat, she said to herself: "Now he means it, and I shall no longer be able to go to my lawyer. I shall become a poor, lonely prisoner". So she rushed to the door, and was there before the maid. Welhoek said afterwards that Agatha had made all her preparations in secret, that she had sent away some of her furniture, her clothes and her linen, and only went when everything was ready. In both stories there are difficulties. If we believe the burgomaster, we must conclude that he was the victim of a conspiracy of silence, and that in a house which was the centre of public attention and where his wife was entirely on his side, his daughter's belongings could be moved and sent away unobserved by him and by the friends who would have been delighted to inform him. On the other hand it is odd that acting upon a sudden impulse to escape, Agatha was able to lay hands on a cloak—it was March—and on money, and that a barge was due to leave for The Hague before her father was able to discover her movements. Agatha and Bornius never ceased to maintain that the latter was entirely unaware of the escape until she wrote to him from The Hague. It is probable that passion in the case of Welhoek, and loyalty to helpful friends, in the case of Agatha, coloured both versions. Certainly it is difficult to believe that the maids were as ignorant of Agatha's disappearance as they afterwards made out.

With all the doors of the house locked, the burgomaster thought that his daughter was safely at home. He discovered her absence a few hours later, probably at mealtime. He soon learned that she was at The Hague, and a few days later he appeared in person before the consistory of the Dutch Reformed church. The Dutch church had refused to give him his parting certificate of release, and he had not ceased, therefore, to belong to it officially. He made a long and rambling statement, which, as the minutes of the consistory say, was "larded with many and divers accusations and injuries against dominus Bornius". He said that the minister had made blasphemous sermons on the subject of oaths, and complained that his daughter Agatha had once more started legal proceedings against him, and had now left the parental home. He did not know where she was, and asked the consistory to see to it that she returned and refrained from visiting Bornius as long as her lawsuit went on. He promised, in return, to receive his daughter in a friendly and fatherly manner. But if she did not return, he would resort to

sterner measures. Thereupon he became angry once more, and accused the consistory of being partial and prejudiced.

The consistory debated the matter after the burgomaster had withdrawn. The conclusions it reached were admirable in their fairness and their prudence. On the one hand it was noted in the minutes that Welhoek's aspersions on the consistory's integrity and impartiality were strongly resented. On the other hand it was stated that by leaving her parents' home Agatha had behaved in a way that was unbecoming to a communicant of their church, and that, as her whereabouts were unknown, dominus Bornius must be heard on the subject. At the next meeting Bornius denied all previous knowledge of Agatha's flight. He added, however, that she had left her home because her father threatened to lock her up, and said that this could be confirmed by the maids of the Welhoek household.

The two maids were summoned before the consistory, which met again a few days later. Both of them, Mayken Pouwels, aged 45, who had been with the Welhoeks for fourteen years, and Margreta van der Hoogh, aged 30, who had been with them for three years, bore out the statement of dominus Bornius. They said that Agatha was a god-fearing girl and a good daughter who to their knowledge had never done a wrong to her parents. The parents, however, had often treated her harshly and spoken sharp words to her. They told of a number of quarrels, and their version of the final episodes agreed entirely with that given by Agatha in a number of letters addressed to the bench of magistrates. The consistory decided that there were no grounds for reaching a decision. The whole business was therefore adjourned, but, in view of the fact that by leaving her home Agatha had placed herself in the wrong, it was decided that she was not to be admitted to holy communion.

The attitude of the calvinist consistory could hardly give satisfaction to the angry burgomaster. He had more success with his fellow-regents. Agatha was writing a string of letters in which she pressed them to come to a speedy decision. She wrote on March 24th and 28th, on May 23rd and on July 7th. She told the whole story of her father's oath once more, and made it clear that she had recourse to the bench only to save her father's conscience, as she knew that he could not himself authorise the marriage. Her sworn affidavits were handed to the bench, but her father also presented sworn statements, and demanded that Agatha's suit be dismissed. In one of her letters Agatha said: "I humbly beseech Your Worships that no less justice shall be done to me than to the children of

other citizens". But the magistrates of the bench of Delft had no desire to go against the wishes of their powerful senior. They deferred Agatha's case from one meeting to the next, discovered an infinity of difficulties and unfulfilled formalities, and summer and autumn passed without a verdict. In November Agatha once more petitioned the bench for a decision, and on December 8th she wrote a personal letter to each of the seven aldermen begging him to see that justice was done. She sent the whole packet to Bornius, who went to deliver each letter at its address. Meanwhile the old burgomaster went about the town telling people that Bornius's courtship had not been as innocent as his daughter alleged, and complaining that he had been very ill-used. He also managed to be re-elected to one of the burgomasters' seats. He was to assume office on January 1st 1662, and he remained a burgomaster for a period of two years.

Geraldo Welhoek was in the ascendant once more. On December 16th 1661 the bench of aldermen gave their verdict, with costs, in favour of the burgomaster-elect. They refused Agatha permission to marry Bornius, and ordered her to return to her father's home. They were of course unable to enforce this order, since Agatha was not within their jurisdiction. But, armed with this verdict, Welhoek demanded that the consistory should persuade Agatha to come home, where she would be well received, provided she refrained from meeting Bornius. The consistory, however, declined to take any steps as long as Welhoek did not withdraw the accusations he had made against its integrity in the previous spring. The democratic calvinists were not yet as greatly in awe of the burgomaster as his fellow regents.

Within a fortnight Agatha delivered her counter-blow. She placed the whole affair "before the political judge". In other words, she appealed to the court of Holland, on January 2nd 1662, and asked for the verdict of the Delft magistrates to be quashed. The burgomaster filed a document through his lawyer in which he stated that as his daughter had left his home and was kept from him without his knowing her whereabouts, he was unable to appear and to put in a plea. He therefore requested that the court should in the first place and before taking any further steps make an order directing his daughter to return to the home of her parents. Agatha immediately applied to the court for a verdict in her favour on the grounds that her father refused to put in an appearance after she had summoned him before the court. But upon Welhoek's giving a formal declaration that he was not actuated by ill-will against his

daughter, the court pronounced that until she had returned to his house Welhoek was not bound to answer any summons issued by her, or to put in an appearance in any lawsuit she might initiate against him. Moreover, the court announced that proceedings would be taken against anyone who assisted Agatha or gave her shelter while she was a fugitive from her father's house. This decision was taken on February 14th 1662. The doctors of law of The Hague, whose court was notorious for its involved and dilatory procedure, had reached a conclusion within six weeks of the date of Agatha's appeal.

Burgomaster Welhoek was not a man of half measures. His daughter might have returned home at this stage and resumed her appeal, which had after all not been finally dismissed. He therefore set his lawyers to work to prevent a surprise move on Agatha's part. By the end of April they had discovered a resolution of the States of Holland dating from 1597, which laid down the rule that if the magistrates of a town agreed with the parents in refusing permission for a marriage there was no appeal from their decision. As an appeal was not forbidden in a case where the magistrates disagreed with the parents, this meant in fact that the right of appeal was left to parents but not to children. This resolution was brought to the notice of the magistrates of Delft. On the following September 27th the States of Holland passed a resolution confirming the resolution of 1597, which shows that Welhoek's political friends had been as active as his lawyers.

Agatha realised that she was utterly defeated. She came back to Delft and on July 11th she and her father appeared before Gerard van der Wel, notary public in the town of Delft, and, in the presence of witnesses, signed a formal standstill contract. Agatha undertook to renounce any attempt to obtain a reversal of the verdict of the court of Holland and not to take any proceedings against her father with a view to obtaining his consent to her proposed marriage with Arnoldus Bornius. She also undertook that while her father was alive she would at no time, without his full and free consent, marry or attempt to marry Bornius, and that she would obey her father in every respect. On his part Welhoek promised not to do anything that might harm the honour or reputation of Bornius or his friends. The contract registered the most complete victory for the burgomaster. His only concession was an undertaking to abstain from slandering Bornius, but he made no promise concerning his will, and did not renew the permission for the two lovers to meet. Agatha's sole consolation was the hope that after her father's death she might at last marry Bornius.

Agatha was allowed once more to take the sacrament. She resumed an uncomfortable existence with her father. Both wrapped themselves up in their resentment: the daughter was waiting for her father to die, and the burgomaster, who was in his seventieth year, knew what his daughter was waiting for. After a few months the determined young woman became impatient. She went secretly to Bornius, who, fearful of the consequences, was yet unable to refuse her access to his house. The visits increased in number, and while in the past Agatha came at agreed intervals and respectably chaperoned, it is more than likely that now she appeared at the parsonage whenever she thought that she could do so unobserved. It was difficult to keep a secret at Delft, and very soon tongues were wagging once more. People said that Agatha Welhoek was living with dominus Bornius as his wife. We may be sure that the minister would have risked no such thing: it would have cost him his position within a week. But when Geraldo Welhoek found out the truth he had another outburst of rage. He demanded that the consistory should order the minister to refuse access to his daughter, and the consistory this time gave satisfaction to the burgomaster. At its request Bornius promised "to abstain from all conversation with Agatha Welhoek, even in case of illness or danger of death".

Meanwhile there were some unpleasant occurrences outside the house of the minister. Crowds collected and booed him. A little rhyme passed from mouth to mouth, in which it was said that just as the sextons tolled the bell to call people to church but stayed away from the service themselves, there were some ministers who preached against sin but did not observe in their own conduct what they preached to others. If we remember that the working classes supported the ministers, we may conclude that the trouble was caused by the rabble, and that Welhoek or his friends had taken a hand in organising their demonstrations. Their intention was not simply to make life difficult for the minister. They wanted a pretext for taking drastic measures against him.

At the meeting of the town council of February 25th 1663 the business was discussed and a resolution was passed, "in the absence of Welhoek", as the regents took great care to note in their minutes. Without breaking the contract of the previous year Welhoek could not have taken part in the deliberations or the passing of the resolutions, but as the resolution stated, it was passed "as a result of a declaration made to them by Mr. Welhoek". His absence from the council was not therefore accidental, and it is difficult to see how his action could be reconciled with his contractual obligation. The

regents in office—*de Heeren van de Wet*—stated in their resolution that “they had reflected with much sorrow and concern upon the scandal provoked by Arnoldus Bornius as a result of his unseemly commerce and conversation with *juffrouw Agatha Welhoek*. . . . Although he had been forbidden to do so”, continued the resolution, “he had persisted in receiving Agatha Welhoek at his house shamelessly and at all times, and had allowed her to be present there, in all appearance as though there had existed between them a legal and solemn marriage”. This had caused scandal, and there was worse to fear from the point of view of public order. For this reason the council had decided to summon Bornius before them, in order to inform him “that the continuation of his association with Agatha was contrary to all modesty and decency, and that it must come to an end on pain of his incurring the council’s displeasure and being prosecuted as a disobedient and undesirable citizen of the town”. This meant, of course, that Bornius was being threatened with expulsion from Delft. To make matters clearer still the council passed a second resolution, on the same or on the following day,—also “*praeter Welhoek*”—stating that in case of disobedience Bornius would be expelled from Delft. On February 27th a copy of this resolution was handed to Bornius, and the next day to Agatha.

At this stage the burgomaster was making arrangements to protract the feud beyond the grave. His death might put an end to the power of his oath, but not of his curse. For now it was the civil authorities which prohibited meetings between the lovers, and no time-limit was set to this interdiction. Two more years of life were left to Welhoek, and with his daughter safely in his house and completely under his control he set to work to leave behind him a heritage of fear and ill-will that was to prolong the effect of his veto even after his death. The first result of his campaign of intimidation appeared in a decision of the consistory which informed Bornius that he would have to give an account of his actions. As we have seen in previous chapters, political passions were running high in the 1660’s, Bornius’s brother was engaged in vehement disputes with the leading lights of the States party, and ministers everywhere were defying the regents and supporting the claims of the orangist party. We can be certain that the attitude of the consistory was the result of fear, and probably of pressure, and not an expression of their own conviction.

The proud burgomaster died on February 7th 1665. He was buried under the monumental tombstone in the Old Church by the side of his first wife. But within four weeks of his death his widow,



justitouw Petronella Spiering, informed the town council that she feared a resumption of the meetings between Bornius and her daughter Agatha, which would cause her "grave annoyance and inconvenience". Without hesitation the council decided "to protect the rights of parents", and to summon Bornius in order to repeat their interdiction of two years ago. They also informed Agatha of their decision.

Two years passed, the difficult years of the second Anglo-Dutch war, during which orangists and calvinists mistakenly believed that the States party was fighting England solely because its king was the uncle of young prince William III, while the clergy were recalcitrant and not infrequently friendly to the enemy. On January 5th 1667 Bornius followed the example of many of his colleagues and dealt with public affairs from the pulpit. We have no record of what he said. In view of what we know of his character it is unlikely that he ventured very far. Nevertheless he caused offence to some regents who were among his congregation. They declared that he had cast doubts upon the righteousness of the cause of the Dutch Republic in the war with England, whereupon the council decided that his salary should be withheld until he gave satisfaction. Bornius made another sermon in which he argued that he had said nothing offensive, but the council looked upon this as a case of open resistance and suspended him from his functions until he had given the fullest satisfaction. It also decided to inform the States of Holland of what had taken place. This happened on February 7th, and towards the end of March Bornius petitioned the council to reinstate him, adding that if he had given offence it was quite unintentionally. This, however, did not satisfy the council, who threatened to take further measures against him, which could only mean that they would expel him from the town.

The story of Bornius's misadventures was well known outside Delft, and he was not as friendless in other places as in this town, where the iron rule of the magistrates prevented even those who agreed with him from giving him any support. In June two delegates from the consistory of Alkmaar arrived with the welcome news that their community invited him to become its minister at a salary that was considerably above the average then paid to ministers. Bornius accepted at once, and took his departure in July.

We do not know whether Bornius was able to meet Agatha before he left, or whether they kept up a regular correspondence. But Agatha had lost none of her old determination. She was of age, and in possession of her paternal inheritance. She was free to move



elsewhere and it was difficult for her mother to forbid the banus outside Delft, although in strict legality she could have done so. Agatha remained at Delft for another two years, trying in vain to obtain her mother's consent to the marriage. Finally she parted from her mother in a friendly way, and went to Alkmaar. We may take it, therefore, that the widow considered that she had done her duty by her late husband and that, provided she was not asked to give her explicit consent, she was not bound to take active steps to prevent the marriage. Before leaving Delft Agatha asked the consistory for the usual certificate that was to serve her as an introduction to the community which she was joining. This, however, was refused on the grounds that she was leaving Delft against her mother's will "and to the great scandal of the community".

On July 13th 1670 dominus Arnoldus Bornius and Agatha Welhoek were married in the pretty little church of the village of Schermerhorn near Alkmaar. The bridegroom was 57 years of age, the bride was 33. The new juffrouw Bornius wrote once more to Delft for her certificate of membership of the church, and once more the consistory refused it, unless she expressed regret at her past behaviour. The certificate must have been very necessary indeed to the wife of a minister, for Agatha humbled herself and wrote a long letter in which she tried to justify her actions. Her mother, she stated, had now written to her to say that she had no complaints against her. At last the precious document was despatched.

Nine years of happiness were the reward of Agatha's perseverance. Her husband exercised the ministry without clashing either with his parishioners or with the authorities. Within two years of his marriage he had the happiness of witnessing the restoration of the house of Orange in the person of William III, whose appointment he greeted with a latin poem *Gaudia et Vota Batavorum*. He published a number of lyrical and religious poems in the Dutch language, and had a circle of literary friends who held him in great esteem. Agatha bore him five children, two of which reached adult years.

Bornius died in 1679. Four years later Agatha married another minister, Henricus Troye, of The Hague. She died at the age of 78, one month before her second husband.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The sources used for the story of Agatha Welhoek are: Pamphlets K 8823 of 1663 and K 8942 of 1664; *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biographisch Woordenboek* sub Bornius, A. and Bornius, H., and Briell; Reinier Boitet, *Beschryving der Stadt Delft*, Delft, 1729, with annual lists of the administrations of the town; *Tegenwoordige Staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, Vol. IV; H. de Veer, *Agatha Welhoek*, 1860, consisting mainly of extracts from the register of the consistory of the Dutch Reformed community at Delft.

# BOOK III

## THE PRINCES AND THE PEOPLE

### CHAPTER I

#### PARTIES AND UNITY

A FEW years before the fall of the Dutch Republic, in 1792, Joachim Rendorp, a descendant of a family of regents, published his memoirs.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to this work he observed that the most glorious moments in the history of the Republic occurred "when the conduct of affairs was in the hands of one, or of a few". This observation, he continued, caused him to draw the conclusion "that the stadtholdership is an essential element in our constitution. Let us look upon the matter with an historical and impartial eye", he wrote. "Who were the people in our country who first raised the cry in our various revolutions? It seems to me that in the stadtholderless periods they were the friends of the house of Orange who were out of office or who wanted to increase their authority through the promotion of the prince. On the other hand, when there was a stadtholder, those who raised the cry were people who considered their authority insufficient or who bore a grudge against the stadtholder because they had been offended in some way. The former kind of malcontents launched the complaint that none but selfish purposes were being served and that the country's business suffered from neglect. The latter, however, shouted that freedom was in danger and that privileges and rights were trampled underfoot by the stadtholder. Meanwhile", concluded Van Rendorp, "if we look at what actually did happen in our country, we notice that whether or not there was a stadtholder, our persons and our property were safe, while the least among the citizens, secure from the interference even of the most highly placed, was allowed to live quietly in the manner that suited their condition".

The thesis proclaimed 150 years ago by Van Rendorp is that which I should like to justify and illustrate in this third book. Nothing is more fatal for a sound understanding of the history of the Dutch Republic than the habit of seeking sharp contrasts between

<sup>1</sup> *Memoriën dienende tot Opheldering van het Gebeurde gedurende den laatsten Engelschen Oorlog*, Amsterdam, 1792. See Vol. I, pp. 17-19.

the orangists and the States party. Reality was not so dramatic. I have pointed out in the earlier parts of this study that from the essential point of view of class and of social conditions there was no difference whatever between the periods with and the periods without a stadtholder. Both were periods of social and economic dictatorship of the upper middle class. When they were in power the princes of Orange used members of the regent caste to impose their will upon the country. The only difference between regents of the States party and orangist regents was that the latter looked to the princes for their reward and advancement.

Undoubtedly, while the social policy of the two parties was identical, there existed a difference between their political conceptions. The States party consisted of federalists with a medieval conception of the state, whereas the princes of Orange hankered after unity and tried their hand at modern state building. Even so, the modernism of the princes of Orange was tainted by the fact that like the Dutch state they owed their existence and their position to the medievalist revolt of the sixteenth century, and to conceptions that were bound to circumscribe their activities. Instead of devoting themselves to systematic state building they were compelled by the nature of things to work for their own dynastic aggrandisement. The limited extent of the national territory, however, and the slender means at the disposal of a small nation tended to make the monarchism of the princes of Orange dangerous to the independence of the nation. Too often the princes sought the support of foreign countries and foreign monarchs for their dynastic policy. They took sides and thus endangered their country. But if one looks at the methods by which the States party opposed this policy one must agree that they had equally serious drawbacks. The unity which was so indispensable could, according to them, be achieved by the preponderance of Holland in the Dutch Republic. To achieve this and to keep their competitors, the princes and their military supporters, powerless, they applied a policy of partial disarmament on land. This in turn involved the States party, when it was in power, in impossible compromises and concessions, as was clearly shown by the failure of John de Witt's policy in 1672.

We who look from a distance at the history of the Republic should find it easy to see that only by a fusion of the better principles of both parties could a safe and satisfactory policy be evolved. Although it was more difficult for contemporaries to realise this need, there is no doubt that a number of them were aware of the fact that the continued existence of the Dutch nation could be

achieved only by a policy of synthesis and by a softening of the political contrasts that existed between the two parties. The policy which in the long run served the country best was neither purely orangist nor purely that of the States party. It was indeed a synthesis of orangist activism and of the cautiousness of the anti-orangist regents. A good example is provided by what happened after the peace of Nimwegen of 1678. Had William been all-powerful his fatalistic trust in Providence would have caused him to rush into a premature war with the France of Louis XIV, which might well have ended in defeat and in the loss of Dutch independence. On the other hand Amsterdam's efforts to thwart William's plans would have strengthened Louis XIV to such an extent that he might have crushed the Republic when he deemed the moment arrived for attacking it. Instead, however, the leaders of Amsterdam's policy saw the danger of the situation, and from 1685 onward they gradually drew nearer to the stadtholder. This led eventually to active intervention in European affairs at the right moment, with the result that Dutch policy triumphed and the Republic was saved. It is not always possible to perceive the impulse towards a synthesis so clearly at work. The Dutch were seldom as wise as they showed themselves in the 1680's. It was when this wisdom was most lacking that the Republic experienced its greatest danger.

It is undeniable that the conception of a national synthesis did not arise for the first time in the minds of later historians. Many contemporaries were so impressed by its necessity that they found themselves unable to give their full allegiance to either party, unless one prefers to say that they managed to belong to both at the same time. The orangist historian Japikse speaks of "a centre party which found support at Haarlem from the beginning of the first stadtholderless period and which grew in importance as people began to realise that something must be done for the prince". He says that this party also had many adherents in Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> To talk of a centre party suggests consciousness and purpose. The formula evolved by Japikse in a later work is perhaps more attractive. "We should beware", he says, "of establishing too sharp a contrast between the regents and the rest of the population. With the exception of a small minority the regents were ready to accept the house of Orange, though not in the position which it had acquired for itself. The people, on the other hand, wanted the house of Orange in the position it had acquired, although not as a sovereign."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Witt*, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *De Geschiedenis van het Huis van Oranje-Nassau*, 2 vols., 1937.

An interesting instance of the idea of synthesis as it manifested itself in the second half of the seventeenth century is provided in the correspondence of the brothers Van der Goes.<sup>1</sup> Economically and socially they belonged to the class from which the regents were drawn. As they were catholics, they were not eligible for office. Their material interests were in safe hands under the dictatorship of the representatives of their own class. One would have expected, therefore, that these religious nonconformists would have been supporters of the tolerant States party. Yet they were convinced orangists, though not to the extent of approving of every action of the orangist party. In 1672 they wrote disapprovingly of the treatment inflicted upon some of the regents of the defeated States party.

The attitude of the nobility of the province of Holland towards the end of the first stadtholderless period would be unintelligible if we imagined that they were necessarily supporters of the orangist party. Among the deputies of the nobility in the States of Holland were a number of supporters of the system of John De Witt and of the States party. In 1672 these noblemen went over to the other side and became supporters of the prince of Orange. But neither before nor after the change were they moved by opportunist considerations. Indeed, they showed themselves capable of making a stand for their principles and of acting in a way which cannot possibly have pleased the new stadtholder. In July 1672 William III was trying to drive some of his opponents from public life. He appeared before the States General and demanded that certain persons, whose names he refused to mention, should leave the assembly. It was a clear attempt at intimidation, and the prince no doubt expected his opponents to walk out the moment his demand had been granted. But the States General were unable to reach a decision, and the business was referred to the States of each sovereign province. When the matter came before the States of Holland the deputies of the nobility agreed that it might be advisable "that some persons should leave the assembly of the States General". But they added that this should happen "under conditions of secrecy, so that these persons should not be exposed to hostile comment or to ill-treatment on the part of the people". Moreover, when John De Witt tendered his resignation as grand pensionary in August 1672, the delegates of the nobility declared: "that they would have liked to see the grand pensionary continue his faithful services; that the state could

<sup>1</sup> *Briefwisseling tusschen de Gebroeders van der Goes*, uitgegeven door C. J. Gorinet, 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1899 and 1909.

not well do without him, especially from the point of view of its finances; that, however, they had to give way to the demands of the time".<sup>1</sup> This is not the language of people who rally to the triumphant party out of fear or self-interest, nor is it the language of partisans. It is the language of men who are concerned first and foremost with the good of their country.

The princes of Orange were themselves influenced by the conception of a higher national synthesis. This may not have applied to all of them to the same extent, nor were they necessarily aware of the force that was guiding some of their actions. No doubt, there was one major difference between the position of the princes of Orange in the Dutch Republic and that of the sovereigns of the kingdom of the Netherlands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While these rulers stand above parties and are the acknowledged embodiment of the idea of national synthesis, the princes of Orange were party leaders. But they were party leaders in a restricted sense, for they were far less devoted to their supporters than their supporters were to them. While Dutch democracy was orangist, the princes were anything but democrats. In part, this was the result of opportunism. The princes carefully adhered to the pattern of conduct laid down by prince Maurice in his campaign against Van Oldenbarnevelt. The close friends who belonged to their camarilla encouraged and even inspired the propaganda campaigns of preachers, pamphleteers and rumourmongers, while the princes kept aloof from the rough and tumble of political agitation. William II was, of course, a notorious exception to this rule. He committed himself recklessly and his relative lack of success must be due at least in part to his disregard of the model set by his uncle Maurice. But it was in the hour of triumph that the princes of Orange proved themselves to be more than partisans. As I have pointed out repeatedly, the princes accepted the social dispensation which existed in the Republic. But in their attitude they were not exclusively inspired by a dislike of the democracy of which they made such effective use. For whenever the hour of triumph came they seemed to realise what was demanded of them. To put their motive at its lowest, they felt that their sole chance of dynastic survival was for them to become identified with a national consciousness which transcended partisanship.

It would be beyond the compass of this work to survey the whole

<sup>1</sup> *Notulen gehouden ter Staten Vergadering van Holland (1671-1675) door Cornelis Hop, Pensionaris van Amsterdam, en Nicolaas Vivien, Pensionaris van Dordrecht.* Edited by N. Japikse (Amsterdam 1903).

history of the Dutch Republic from the point of view of this nascent idea of synthesis. The next chapters will therefore deal with a few moments in the life of the Dutch people during which this synthesis can be seen most clearly at work.

## CHAPTER II

## FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PARTIES

THE international position of the Dutch Republic was bound to exercise a profound influence upon the development of the party struggle. As I have indicated, the regents of the States party followed a cautious policy of balance and abstention, while the princes of Orange were inclined to take risks and to act as though the Republic were more powerful than it was. Whichever party was in power, its foreign policy must be influenced and determined by the fact that the Republic was neither economically nor militarily self-sufficient. However wealthy, the Dutch Republic could not buy sufficient armaments and soldiers to resist a joint onslaught by its neighbours. What happened more than once was that by trying to remain friends with everybody the regents of the States party left their country friendless; while by taking sides too rashly the princes of Orange involved it in dangerous commitments.

It is clear that France presented the greatest danger to the independence of the Dutch Republic. Since the decline of Spain, which became patent in the course of the thirty years' war, France had inherited the military hegemony of the continent. In the course of their national state building the kings of France and their leading ministers, while trying to make their territory homogeneous and compact, were impeded again and again by the fact that the chances of history had placed their capital far too much to the north.<sup>1</sup> Gradually they developed the theory of natural frontiers which would have given France the barrier of the Rhine. Simultaneously, there were revivals of the Charlemagne legend and of the notion that France was the genuine heir of the Roman Empire of the West. She was entitled, therefore, to large territories outside her alleged natural frontiers. The legend had, of course, a practical

<sup>1</sup> See my *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 1813-15*, Introduction.

aspect: to turn it into reality would have provided France with territories that could have served as a shock absorber in the direction of the Hapsburg dominions. It should never be forgotten that at the beginning of the sixteenth century France was hemmed in by the Hapsburgs, and that it was in 1515—when the French king Francis I was made a prisoner at Pavia—that Europe realised for the first time the need for a balance between the various sovereignties, and even the attractiveness of collective security. France's desire to expand towards the north was, therefore, not dictated by pure economic greed, but by considerations of safety. Nevertheless it confronted the Dutch Republic with a deadly danger.

During their struggle to liberate themselves from Spain the Dutch found that the French were their natural allies. But the very moment they achieved the final recognition of their independence they saw in the new preponderant military power a threat to their national existence. This is why, during the first stadtholderless period, the doctrine was evolved that it was better to have the Frenchman as a friend than as a neighbour, *Gallum amicum non vicinum*. Henceforth Dutch foreign policy threw its whole weight into the protection of the Spanish Netherlands from French annexationism. This policy, which inevitably alienated the former friends of the Republic in France, had to be carried out by the States party and by the De Witts. In 1672 the Dutch Republic was actually invaded by the French, who occupied the major part of its territory; but only at the time of the French Revolution was the annexationist policy of France completely triumphant. Then at last the Rhine frontier was reached, and buffer territories beyond the Rhine, including the whole territory of the Dutch Republic, were acquired by France.

Relations between the Republic and England were of a more complex nature. One meets frequently with references to the trade rivalry between the two countries which led inevitably to periodical outbreaks of war. We are reminded less frequently of the fact that while the Dutch lived for two and a quarter centuries in their independent Republic they were at war with England for less than ten years. Nor was it because of the outcome of these wars that the English were able finally to outpace their Dutch trade rivals. The economic decline of the Dutch Republic resulted from exhaustion after great wars waged in alliance with England against the threat from France, and from the inevitable operation of other factors entirely unconnected with war. A time came when the exiguous territory of the Republic, however rich the Dutch may have been in



colonies and in trade connections, was insufficient to maintain its population in the forefront of economic development. Larger countries with greater natural resources leapt ahead of the Dutch. It is more than probable that the decline of Dutch prosperity in the eighteenth century was relative rather than absolute. In the eighteenth century as in the seventeenth the world was an unlimited reservoir at the disposal of all who were energetic and enterprising. There was no need for competitors to elbow each other out. All could share in the unexploited wealth of the globe.

Contrasting with the largely imaginary economic incompatibility was the obvious community of interest between England and the Dutch Republic in the field of national security. The Dutch territory with its large estuaries was a natural gathering point for fleets that could be used for the invasion of the easily accessible eastern shore of England. At one time it seemed as though the best way to obviate the potential threat from the Low Countries was the occupation of bridgeheads. This was still the policy of Queen Elizabeth who collected cautionary towns in Holland and Zeeland. But early in the seventeenth century the English realised that bridgeheads were a cumbersome liability. They gave preference to the policy of forbidding access to the Low Countries to anyone who might become a threat to the safety of England. Gradually it became a leading principle of English foreign policy that the dominant military power of the continent should possess neither the Southern nor the Northern Netherlands. Whenever the independence of these countries was in danger England felt bound to go to war for its protection. This was true in the days of Philip II, and was found equally true in the days of Louis XIV, Napoleon and Kaiser William II.

From the Dutch point of view the problem of Anglo-Dutch relations appeared a trifle more complicated. Although in the long run England was bound to rescue the Dutch, those who were in charge of her foreign policy might at any time take a shorter view. Cromwell fought the Dutch as much because they refused to unite with England into one single commonwealth as because the merchants of the city of London envied their prosperity and resented their overbearing arrogance. Cromwell, whose mental make-up was primarily religious, failed to see that Spain had ceased to be the most dangerous of continental countries. He fought the Dutch though France was already becoming a threat to them. It is true that it was not long before he saw the error of his ways and resumed friendly relations with the Dutch Republic. He was followed by

picturesque Charles II, who is so popular nowadays with English historiographers, who flirted with catholicism when the majority of his subjects were bent upon remaining protestant, and who sold himself to the king of France, when France was England's natural competitor and enemy. He planned to divide the territory of the Dutch Republic with Louis XIV. Had the schemes of these two rulers succeeded, England, brought back to Rome against her will, would have seen the greatest military power of the continent established on the coast of the Low Countries and threatening the shadowy independence of the petty principality which Charles II was willing to leave as a reward for treason to his nephew prince William III. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the policy of anglophily at all costs, which was that of the leading orangists more perhaps than that of the princes of Orange themselves, presented grave dangers to the national existence of the Dutch. Close collaboration with England was justified only when those in command at The Hague could make sure that the masters of England were aware of the true position and of the importance of Dutch independence for the safety of their own country.

The first stadtholderless period and the régime of John De Witt had seen two short and sharp wars with England, fought with the changing success that characterised naval warfare in those days. However successful a naval power might be in the seventeenth century, a time always came when the need to revictual and to careen its ships compelled it to withdraw from the scene of its success. At one period in the second Anglo-Dutch war, the Dutch swept the channel and frightened the English off the sea. A few months later the port of Amsterdam was paralysed and grass grew between its cobble stones. It is undeniable that the brilliant resistance of the Dutch against a stronger and more centralised enemy was mainly the work of John De Witt and of his brother Cornelis. The second Anglo-Dutch war (1665-1667) ended abruptly with a peace by compromise because the two countries became aware of a new threat from France. Louis XIV had taken over the reins of government a few years earlier upon the death of the great minister Mazarin. He tried to carry into effect the dreams of the cardinal and to acquire a foothold in the Low Countries. The incredible War of Devolution was no more than a triumphant raid by Louis's armies in the Southern Netherlands. John De Witt, by a stroke of brilliant statesmanship, brought England and Sweden on his side and compelled Louis to give up his ill-gotten gains. Louis never forgave the grand pensionary. As we have noted

before, his policy was never primarily inspired by economic considerations. Power and prestige were ever the dominant motives of one whose main preoccupation was his own glory and that of the country of which he was the owner. Ever since the peace of 1667 Louis was like a sergeant who bears a grudge against a recruit. The Dutch were in the unfortunate position of the private who can find no grace in the eyes of his officer.

In England the reluctance of Charles II to apply economy in the affairs of state and the unwillingness of parliament to provide money even when it was genuinely required by the country were leading to an impasse. Louis found that Charles II was for sale. He bought him with a subsidy and with a mistress who was less good-looking than Charles's Portuguese spouse. The secret treaty of Dover in 1670 laid the foundation for a joint Anglo-French onslaught upon Dutch territory.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE YEAR OF THE PRINTING PRESS—1672

PREPARATIONS for the coming war went on at a leisurely pace. Louis was collecting further allies among the petty rulers on the eastern frontier of the Dutch Republic by playing on their greed and their jealousy. Though ignorant of the details of the royal plot, European opinion was well aware of the trend of coming events. De Witt was making desperate efforts to conciliate the enemies of the Republic and to enlist supporters. Inside the Republic his enemies were numerous. The people resented the fact that the prince of Orange continued to be kept out of office. For years they had been singing *al is ons Prinsje nog zoo klein*—"the prince is small, but one day he will be our stadtholder". The prince was now grown up and his supporters wanted him to receive the honours, titles and powers of his ancestors. They believed that the king of England, delighted at the promotion of his nephew, would at once take his part and support the Republic against the threat from France. No greater mistake could have been made. Though willing to use him as an instrument, Charles II was otherwise indifferent to his fate. When, in 1672, William was made stadtholder and captain-general, Charles continued to fight the Republic and tried to buy his nephew by offering him the

sovereignty over a small portion of Dutch territory. The threatening international situation raised the hopes of the orangists and encouraged them to launch one of the campaigns of which Dutch history shows so many examples.

The year 1672 is the most dramatic year in the history of the Dutch Republic.<sup>1</sup> Contemporaries called it "the year of miracles"—*het wonderjaar*. The miracle was, of course, that the Republic survived the fourfold onslaught of its enemies. France, England and two German electors of Cologne and of Munster declared war in the early spring. The English navy was beaten off by De Ruyter, but on land the enemy was highly successful. The French crossed the Rhine in the middle of June, and on July 3rd Louis XIV entered Utrecht, in the heart of the Republic. Only the two maritime provinces of Holland and Zeeland, and some territories in the north-east, continued to hold out behind barriers of water, marsh and heath. Yet, before the year was out, it had become clear that, long though the struggle might last, the Dutch had escaped the destruction their proud enemy Louis had intended for them. It was a year of miracles indeed. Contemporaries also called 1672 "the year of murder"—*het moordjaar*. It was the year when the people of The Hague murdered those two great patriots and statesmen John and Cornelis De Witt.

Yet another name was given by contemporaries to the strange leap year 1672 which brought about such great changes in the Dutch state. They called it *drukjaar*, which is a pun, for it means at the same time the year of stress and the year of printing. It was indeed a year of incredible activity for the printing presses of the Republic. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that as many pamphlets were poured out in 1672 as during the three preceding quarters of a century. We have seen what part the pamphleteers played in the fight against Oldenbarnevelt. Throughout the first stadtholderless period pamphlets were published in favour, but more often against, the De Witts and the States party. These pamphlets were not only greedily absorbed by the Dutch people, for whom they played the part which the leading article of the popular press plays nowadays, but foreign countries also kept an attentive eye upon these famous or notorious blue books, as they were called from the fact that they usually appeared in a blue cover. In 1671 printers in Vienna were collecting every Dutch blue book "which contains something curious on the subject of affairs that are now brewing".

<sup>1</sup> I have told the story of the year 1672 in my *William of Orange*, (1932). The latest and most up-to-date story will be found in Geyl's *Oranje en Stuart*, (1939) pp. 381-539.

These pamphlets were translated into various languages and sold in many countries, even in far-away Russia.<sup>1</sup> Sylvius, the author of a sequel to Aitzema's history, says that in June 1672 "the blue books flew in masses through the land, where they were perused not a little. . . . From words and writings it came to acts".<sup>2</sup> Sylvius also says that at Amsterdam "many of the members of the magistracy were suspected by some people who were too easily distrustful and who threw about blue books and libels".<sup>3</sup>

The orangist pamphleteers knew their business. They wasted little time, at this stage, in pleading the cause of young William III. His star was in the ascendant in any case. When the enemy began to close in round the Dutch Republic in 1671, the States party realised the inevitability of a partial concession. They appointed William III commander-in-chief for one campaign. Towards the end of the year it became increasingly certain that war would come, and the prince was given his definite commission as captain-general. His appointment as stadtholder in the five provinces where his ancestors had occupied this position continued to be postponed. As captain-general William was organising the defence on land, while De Witt was busily fitting out the fleet. The grand pensionary still held the threads of diplomacy and tried to run the unwieldy machine of the decentralised Republic.

If no attempts were made by the orangist pamphleteers to voice the public demand for the prince's appointment as stadtholder, it was because they understood so well what was taking place. Afraid of the coming onslaught, the population was obeying a primeval instinct and calling for the leader with a hieratic sanction, for the blue-blooded prince who had ancestors and a name. Mass psychology could be left to do its work unaided. Once in a way the propagandists would throw out in passing the assertion that "the freedom of our country is entirely due to the princes of Orange".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. van der Goes, from Vienna, Oct. 8th 1671, *op. cit.*, p. 286. In 1670 a complaint was received from Russia because in several pamphlets published in Amsterdam the Czar was not given his correct title. See Bontemantel, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, ed. Kernkamp, 1897, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Sylvius, *Historiën*, Vol. I (1685, p. 314).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347-348, also p. 357. See Wicquefort, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 126-127, 132, and Van der Goes, *op. cit.*, p. 401. A. van der Goes wrote: "Incredible numbers of little blue books and pasquils are published here. The grand pensionary has requested the prince in a message, to take measures against this. But the prince has replied that his house and His Highness himself has had much to suffer from what has been disseminated, commended and spread about. This has given the drum-signal to all makers of libels, and the peasants themselves are writing and composing verses and refrains" (from *The Hague*, Aug. 18th 1672).

<sup>4</sup> K. 10224.

Their main object was not to arouse loyalty, but to spread fear and anger, till the regents of the States party were forced to give way to mob pressure. It was not enough, therefore, to assert that those who stood in the way of William III were envious and turbulent people. Attack was necessary. Distrust of the powers that be had to be fanned into indignation and fury. The masses had to be given something more than the benignant father figure represented by a ruler. In the natural relationship between a child and its father veneration co-exists with feelings of resentment and rivalry. Apart from the paternal figure of the monarch the mob also needs his counterpart, that of the minister upon whom it can work off the instincts of hostility which are bound to reveal themselves sooner or later. The beauty of a constitutional monarchy is that it provides the people with both symbols at the same time. In 1672 the Dutch people were still waiting for the protecting father figure. But its malignant counterpart was available.<sup>1</sup>

Material from which to draw up an indictment against John De Witt and his party was not difficult to obtain. Owing to a miscalculation on the part of the leaders of the Republic's foreign policy, its two great neighbours were becoming its enemies simultaneously. This tragedy could have been avoided in one way only: by submitting to French ambition. Such, however, was not the opinion of the orangist critics. As we have seen, they believed or professed to believe that there was a way out, and that the elevation of the prince of Orange would have reconciled his uncle Charles II with the Republic. The pamphleteers went further in their desire to exploit the situation for their own ends. They did not hesitate to resort to deliberate lies. They said that the States party had intentionally antagonised England because they wanted war to break out in order to defeat the natural ally of the prince with the aid of France. England, they proclaimed, was not to be blamed for declaring war: the Republic itself was responsible for breaking the Triple Alliance. Consistency was the least concern of these propagandists. At one moment they accused De Witt and his supporters of having sold themselves to France, of requesting Louis to invade the territory of the Republic to prevent an orangist restoration, while the next moment they complained that the States were challenging France and had ordered the fleet to go cruising along the French coast out of sheer bravado.<sup>2</sup> The pamphleteer who made all these accusa-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Psychology of Constitutional Monarchy*, by Dr. Ernest Jones in *The New Statesman and Nation* of Feb. 1st 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Verscheide Consideratiën*, July or August 1672 (K 10224).

tions found it impossible to deny the great services rendered by the brothers De Witt in organising the Dutch navy, but he argued that this work was pointless. Even the raid on the Medway, he said, had not resulted in any political gain. Evidence of the treachery of the States party was written in every page of the history of the Republic. If in 1654 Cromwell demanded the perpetual exclusion of William III from the office of stadtholder of Holland, he was only allowing himself to be prompted by the States party. If the orangist admiral Tromp fell in a battle with the English, the shot that killed him was fired from a Dutch musket. Was not the enemy fleet out of range when the admiral was hit?

Similar accusations appeared in scores of blue books. John De Witt was singled out for particularly venomous attacks. It was said and believed that he had deposited a vast fortune in Italy in readiness for the time when he would have to fly the country. Needless to say these millions were the reward of corrupt practices. Even the most straightforward private investments of the grand pensionary were represented as grossly improper speculations. When, at the end of February 1672, William III was made captain-general for an indefinite period the propagandists hastened to declare that he held the title without power, and that the sole purpose of this appointment was to burden him with the odium of a defeat made inevitable by the regents' neglect. Grievances against the States party were not restricted to political matters. A pamphleteer who said that quantities of ammunition had been sent to Arnhem with the deliberate purpose of letting them fall into French hands also reported in all seriousness that the regents wanted to turn all churches into brothels and that one particular burgomaster had said that all his fellow-citizens were dogs.<sup>1</sup>

It was upon a population demoralised by propaganda of this nature that a series of catastrophic blows fell in quick succession. No wonder that, as was said at the time, the people lost their reason. In May the French army began its orderly, relentless, almost ceremonial march through the principality of Liège which belonged to Louis XIV's ally, the elector of Cologne. Then it entered the territory of the Republic. One after another the fortresses fell, and the people, who had entertained an exaggerated notion of their strength, were panic-stricken and cried "treason". Suspicions were strengthened when the authorities ordered the arrest and trial of some of the defeated commanders. As the invaders drew nearer the heart of the country, the wealthier inhabitants began to move

<sup>1</sup> E.g. K. 10309.

their possessions towards the large towns of Holland. This caused further consternation and soon people began to hold up the goods and chattels of these refugees. The growing discontent provided orangist propaganda with listeners who were even readier to be persuaded than before.

This propaganda was further assisted by the herding together of many people who were in a highly suggestible frame of mind. The field army of the Dutch Republic consisted of mercenaries, but the whole male population between the ages of eighteen and sixty was liable to service in the civic guards or *schutterijen*. By compelling the guards to provide their own equipment and even their own powder and shot, the law in fact excluded the proletariat from these bodies, which in times of peace were nothing but an armed organisation of the middle classes for the purpose of preserving social order. The guards were officered by the well-to-do, and the higher ranks were mostly occupied by members of the regent class, who, after a long spell of stadtholderless government, were usually supporters of the States party. They were now mobilised for duty behind the front, in particular for the prevention of disorder and of plundering by the rabble. The tradespeople and small business men who provided the bulk of the guards were none too pleased at being dragged away from their work. They whiled away their spells of duty airing their grievances and listening to those of their colleagues. It was not difficult to convince them that their call-up was due to the treachery of the regents. Though they grumbled, however, the guards were fervent patriots. They did not want to submit to the French, and towards the end of June the news that negotiations were afoot between the States General and Louis XIV caused an explosion of anger among them.<sup>1</sup> Another section of the population was also being herded together by the necessity of defending the country, and subjected to the propaganda of discontent. It consisted of the country people who were compelled to take part in the construction of fortifications and field works. They hated this work and grumbled ceaselessly. A highly dangerous source of discontent was provided by the traditional disinclination of the peasants to allow the flooding of their lands for the sake of the water-line which was to arrest the progress of the French. The country people were readier even than the townsmen to listen to their clergy, who told them that their misfortunes were due to the wickedness of the States party.

<sup>1</sup> See *Wachtpraetje, Tweede Deel van 't Wachtpraetje*, and *Derde Deel van 't Wachtpraetje*, K 10564, 10565 and 10566. Also C. J. Sickesz, *De Schutterijen in Nederland*, Utrecht 1864, *passim*.



The orangists did not miss the opportunity to work upon the minds of these malcontents.<sup>1</sup>

During the last week of June riots broke out in a number of towns in Holland and in Zeeland. At The Hague four young orangists attacked John De Witt, tried to kill him and succeeded in doing him grievous bodily harm. One of them was arrested and executed. At once he became a hero and a martyr. Pamphlets told the story of his last days in prison, and related his pious conversation and his edifying end on the scaffold. They ran into many editions.<sup>2</sup> They added fuel to the flames that were already burning dangerously high. Throughout the provinces of Holland and Zeeland people were demanding the withdrawal of the edict excluding the prince of Orange from the dignity and office of stadtholder. On June 21st the mob broke the windows of a burgomaster of the town of Veere in Zeeland, and disorder spread rapidly to other towns. Dordrecht followed suit, then came Haarlem, Hoorn, The Hague, Rotterdam, where members of the civic guard, led by several of their officers, mutinied in the belief that the king of England was opposed to the war and wanted nothing but the restoration of his nephew.<sup>3</sup>

Violent sermons were preached everywhere against the regents, and everywhere the people were successfully exercising pressure upon their magistrates to pass resolutions in favour of the restoration of the stadtholdership. At Dordrecht, the home town of the De Witts and the centre of the "Loevestein faction" the agitation took an unexpected turn. Supported by the civic guards the populace surrounded the town hall, and the magistrates, in great fear, sent for the prince whose headquarters were not far away. The prince came over at once, and the mob greeted him with wild acclamations, but refused to disperse and threateningly demanded that their magistrates should make him stadtholder. They had of course no power to do this, as only the States of Holland could make the appointment. The prince harangued the crowd and told them that as far as he was concerned he was perfectly satisfied. But he was informed that until the magistrates did as they were told he would be kept a prisoner with them. After much talk to and fro the magistrates gave a solemn undertaking that they would propose the restoration at the meeting of the States of Holland and do their utmost to make them carry it through. "Gentlemen, I am sorry for you", said the young prince as he took his departure. On this

<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 65-66.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. K. 10461 and 10463.

<sup>3</sup> Wicquefort, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 484 *seq.*

and on similar occasions the prince preserved a perfectly correct attitude. He wanted the restoration to take place in a legal manner, by decisions of the urban magistrates and of their delegates assembled in the States of Holland. He did nothing that could be taken as a direct encouragement to the rioters who demanded his appointment. But apart from issuing one or two rather vaguely worded appeals for the preservation of order he did nothing to discourage them. This is not surprising. He believed that he had a mission to fulfil and the capacity to carry it out. We know that events justified his faith. He considered that he was entitled to the honours of which he had been so long deprived, and his entourage encouraged him in this view. It was too much to expect that he should express disapproval of what was being done on his behalf and restrain his own supporters.

The States party had to give way to mob rule. On July 2nd the States of Zeeland proclaimed the prince of Orange stadtholder of their province, and two days later the States of Holland followed their example. The orangist restoration was complete, and William III found himself in possession of all the dignities that had formerly belonged to his ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER IV

#### ORANGIST DEMOCRACY

LOUIS XIV was preparing a brilliant programme for his triumphant entry into The Hague and Amsterdam, but the water-line was holding. Now that the restoration had taken place, circumstances were not unfavourable for a national union. But political passions were still too violent. Of the orangist party, I have so far described only the vocal rank-and-file and the vociferous shepherds. Behind them, as the clever propaganda of their movement proves, there were brains. There were ambitions, too. There were people who wanted to complete the rout of the States party. To begin with, there was the nobility. Even those noblemen who had supported the States party were now returning to the orangist fold. Another element in the staff of the orangist party was at least as important as these professional orangists. It consisted of members of the regent caste who had quarrelled with the regents in office, and who, for one reason or another, had been kept out of

<sup>1</sup> E.g. K. 10265 and 10292.

public business. There was a second obstacle to the immediate return of harmony. Popular passions had been unleashed. Too much distrust, fear and hatred was abroad. Even if those responsible had wished it, they could not have called democracy to heel the moment its task was fulfilled.

It soon became clear that the prince's restoration was not enough. The States party must be dispossessed, the prince's enemies must be punished. Pamphleteers began to warn the people against the opportunism of the regents who had agreed to the restoration of the stadtholdership. Sometimes their writings adopted the guise of pleas in defence of the citizens who had exercised illegal pressure upon their magistrates. Attacks upon the De Witts and their adherents continued. The mob, which had been used for the orangist restoration, was now to be called upon for the restoration of the orangists. The staff wanted their share of the spoils. Regent tolerance could be turned into a crime, and defeat and invasion described as its heaven-sent punishment. "Preachers are oppressed and are not suffered to speak freely", exclaimed one pamphleteer who expressed himself in verse. "Idolatry is let loose by those who hate God and religion. The glory of the Netherlands is taken away by those who love the red gold more than honour or paradise, by men whose profession of the true religion was never more than a sham."<sup>1</sup> By the true religion the author meant, of course, unadulterated counter-remonstrant calvinism, while in this case idolatry indicated, not the church of Rome, but arminianism. Some of these writings were merely bad sermons consisting of strings of biblical quotations. One of them is interesting because it refers to a grievance of a different nature against the States party. The method of relative centralisation by means of the primacy of the province of Holland naturally aroused jealousy in the other provinces. This orangist author said that during the interregnum—an interesting name for the stadtholderless period which had just come to an end—the province of Zeeland had always been compelled "to dance to the tune played by Holland".<sup>2</sup>

The course of events in Amsterdam shows the mixed nature of the motives that prompted the popular clamour for more change after the elevation of the prince. Amsterdam was steadfast at the hour of direst peril, and its delegates stood out for resistance when many members of the States party advocated submission to Louis XIV. The popular movements which took place in the principal town of the Republic were not aimed in the first place at achieving

<sup>1</sup> K 10237.

<sup>2</sup> K 10263.

an orangist restoration, but at removing a number of regents from the administration. At the time, there were three parties among the Amsterdam regents. The supporters of De Witt had lost much of their influence since the death of their leader who was an uncle of De Witt's wife. His opponents were led by Valckenier, not an orangist, but a typical party-boss capable of joining whichever party his opportunism recommended, and who eventually decided in favour of the orangists. A third group came into existence, differing from De Witt on political grounds, and from Valckenier on grounds of personality and local interests. In 1671 a coalition between the supporters of De Witt and this centre party restored the influence of the grand pensionary. The purpose of the popular movement in Amsterdam was to bring about the resignation or the dismissal of the faction of De Witt, so that an administration led by Valckenier might be formed.

To achieve a change in the personnel of the oligarchic administrations was also becoming the chief aim of the popular movements in all those parts of the country that were still free from French occupation. Towards the end of July this agitation grew into a large concerted movement. Propaganda had achieved its purpose, proletarians and citizens rioted against their magistrates, and the town militias refused to hold them in check, when indeed they did not join them. A non-commissioned officer in the Amsterdam militia wrote a diary in which he reports a conversation that took place between him and his captain in the evening of August 3rd in the presence of their company which was drawn up in formation. The captain told his men to remain on the alert because he expected an attack within half an hour. The respect due to the burgomasters, he said, must be restored. The diarist asked whether this meant fighting their fellow-citizens, and the captain's answer was that orders must be obeyed. But, the diarist insisted, the men could not possibly fight their fellow-citizens, whose views most of them shared. The captain said that he would gladly allow those who felt like this to return home, but the diarist replied that the men were all of one opinion, which they supported by shouting all together that they refused to fight. They added, however, that they would not leave their captain in the lurch, that they would protect him personally against the rabble, and that they also wished to protect the house of his father, who was a burgomaster. It would have been difficult to establish more clearly the deep cleavage that existed between the haves and the have-nots, between "fellow-citizens" and the proletariat. Yet both the haves and the have-nots were

agreed on one point: they wanted a change of magistrates. They differed only as to the method by which the change could be achieved. Even this difference faded away when hatred spoke its loudest word, and the De Witts were massacred.

The gruesome details of the double murder of the De Witts need not be recounted here. The first point to be noted is that when John De Witt and his brother Cornelis were murdered, they had become private citizens, and that their murder was a direct result of the propaganda of hatred inspired by the supporters of the prince of Orange. Another important feature of this murder is that those who committed it belonged to the more respectable citizens of The Hague civic guard, and not to the rabble. On June 26th, Cornelis had been arrested on the trumped-up charge of having plotted the assassination of the prince of Orange, a charge which in view of his character and his principles was patently absurd. Cornelis was tortured but refused to confess under the most horrible torments. Thereupon he was condemned to perpetual banishment, a punishment far too lenient if he was guilty and absurdly heavy for an innocent man, especially in view of the fact that no punishment could be inflicted upon a prisoner who denied his guilt. Meanwhile, the grand pensionary, having recovered from the effects of the attack made upon him on June 21st, appeared before the States of Holland on August 4th, as we have seen, and resigned his office. On August 20th he went to visit his brother who was still in prison recovering from the effects of the torture. They were both dragged out by the guards who had been detailed to protect them and torn to pieces.

William III refused to take steps to punish the culprits. He even gave a pension to one of them. Japikse, the orangist biographer of William III, declared that "there appears to be a definite lack of moral awareness here, a lack of that generosity which characterised William's grandfather". As a matter of fact William could not yet afford to part company with his popular supporters. Their work was not finished: promotion and position had not yet been secured for the leaders of the movement which had brought him to power. This is why nothing was done to check the popular movement against the urban magistrates. Eventually the States of Holland saw that there was nothing left for them but to give way to the agitation. On August 27th, therefore, they addressed to William a request that he should use for once the ancient right of the stadtholders to alter the composition of the town administrations wherever this appeared to be necessary. They said that this request

was inspired by the desire to prevent "that the community should take the restoration of order into their own hands".

Among those who were most active in promoting and defending this resolution in the States of Holland was the new grand pensionary Caspar Fagel. Though his antecedents and his early connections all tended to make him a typical member of the States party, he was in fact a genuine exponent of national synthesis. He studied law and settled as a barrister at The Hague where his ability attracted the attention of John De Witt. He became pensionary of the town of Haarlem and took an active part in the diplomacy of the Republic. At the hour of danger in 1672 he never lost his head and was continually in the van of those who refused to surrender. Formerly a convinced opponent of the elevation of William III, he came to realise that the only way to unite the Dutch people for resistance was to re-establish the stadtholdership. From the moment William III succeeded to the dignities of his ancestors Fagel was among the most convinced and thorough-going supporters of his policy. Had Fagel been a time-server he would no doubt have gone out of his way to prove by the most careful conduct the sincerity of his conversion. But he never hesitated to defend the interests of the regents and in particular of those who belonged to the States party. At Haarlem, where Fagel had been pensionary, the people compelled their magistrates to resign, but as the result of Fagel's advice William re-appointed all the magistrates with one solitary exception.<sup>1</sup>

The new stadtholder was beginning to take similar action in other towns. The citizens of Leyden compelled their magistrates to place their seats at the disposal of the stadtholder whom they presented with a list of eighty names from which they requested him to choose the new magistrates. Twenty-five names in this list were those of former magistrates. These William appointed at once. It is true that at Rotterdam events took a different course. There the popular movement was particularly violent. While the rabble went about destroying property, the citizens of the lower middle classes armed themselves and made far-reaching demands for the reform of the town administration that went well beyond the acknowledged aims of the orangist movement. William III, as we shall see, disapproved strongly of this movement and granted none of the demands, but he compromised by appointing to the town government some "new men", and those not of the richest.<sup>2</sup> Altogether, in the

<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Sylvius, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 363-365.

course of these changes which took place in August and September, out of five hundred magistrates of the eighteen voting towns of the province of Holland, one hundred and forty, or less than one-third, were displaced in favour of others. With rather few exceptions their successors belonged to the same upper middle class; they were well-to-do retired merchants with the same interests and the same outlook as the older regents. It is also worth noting that William showed little attachment to the few *homines novi* he was compelled to promote in 1672. As, in the course of the years that followed, more and more of the former supporters of De Witt deemed it advisable to join the orangist party, the new men were gradually dropped and former regents were restored to the town councils. In 1679 there was a large-scale restoration at Delft.<sup>1</sup>

The truth of the matter is that as early as September 1672 William III was breaking away from the rank and file of his party. The aims of his democratic supporters went far beyond a mere change of personnel in the urban administrations. The movement against the States party was reaching its final stage. The first stage, the movement for a restoration, ended on July 4th, the second stage was one of personal revenge and of readjustment in the urban administrations. The final or democratic stage set in before the aims pursued during the second stage had been entirely achieved. We find traces of this new tendency in several of the pamphlets issued in September and October 1672. They contain frequent references to the doctrine of the social contract. One of them is called *The true Foundation of the newly restored Ancient Dutch Law*.<sup>2</sup> As happened so often in revolutions under the old régime, the revolutionaries justified their action by appealing to the past rather than to the future. Moreover, references to the ancient laws of the Netherlands were typical of the sense of continuity of the Dutch. The author of this pamphlet declared that a contract existed between the governors and those they governed. Another pamphlet, which put forward the demand that the prince should be made count of Holland, stated that the people are the source of all power and that they are entitled to transfer their sovereignty upon anyone they choose.<sup>3</sup> A pamphlet dated August 22nd proclaimed the motto *Pro Populo Principifco*. It was a plea on behalf of the "prince-making people". Here again the doctrine of the social contract was brought forward by the author who considered that the magistrates in the Dutch Republic

<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 219, also p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Het rechte Fondament van het Nieuwe Herstelde Oudt Hollands Regt*, K 10309.

<sup>3</sup> *Nodige Consideratiën*, K 10597.

held the sovereignty in trust as representatives of the people. He differed from other democratic pamphleteers by insisting upon the distinction between citizens and rabble. In his apology for the fact that pressure had been exercised upon the urban magistrates the author declared that the change of magistrates had been imposed "not by the populace and the rabble but by the foremost citizens, *non a Plebe sed a Populo*".<sup>1</sup> This pamphleteer did not go beyond the theory proclaimed in 1581 in the *Plakkaat van Verlatinge*, the document by which the Dutch renounced their allegiance to Philip II of Spain. This document proclaimed the people's right to depose an unworthy ruler, but immediately qualified this right by adding that it would be exercised only as a result of deliberations by the States of the country. The theory of the States party had always been that the States represented the people and acted for them. Participation in the government by the citizens either in the shape of popular elections or through the right to dismiss their magistrates had never been accepted by responsible theorists of the Dutch constitution. The guarded plea of the pamphleteer on behalf of the "prince-making people" betrays a shade of anxiety at the course events were taking and a desire to keep the revolution legal and respectable.

Undoubtedly many of the claims that were being put forward went far beyond the moderate changes to which William III was willing to consent. If, to take one example, the demands of the author of a pamphlet which purported to reproduce a conversation between a few militiamen had been granted, the whole social structure of the Republic would have been shaken. The author advocated the equipment of militiamen free of charge. This reform would have admitted the have-nots to the ranks of the civic guards.<sup>2</sup> Other pamphleteers advocated the return to a procedure which, they alleged, used to be followed in the early days of the Republic, when the armed citizens elected the college that appointed the town council and the burgomasters. They also pleaded that the government should be democratic and not aristocratic, and should serve for a limited period only, after which fresh elections were to be held.<sup>3</sup> The demands for reform expressed in this ephemeral literature were given practical support by the rioters who, though they aimed in the first place at a change of magistrates, usually presented a list of reforms to be introduced at once. We have already mentioned the case of Rotterdam. There the rioters demanded, among other things, that the council of war—consisting of the officers of the militia—should be consulted before decisions concerning foreign policy

<sup>1</sup> K 10479.<sup>2</sup> K 10565.<sup>3</sup> K 10549, also K 10564 already quoted.



were taken. It will be remembered, of course, that owing to the constitution of the Dutch Republic matters concerning treaties, alliances, etc., had often to be referred for further investigation to the councils of the smallest towns. What these petitioners therefore meant was that they should be consulted when Rotterdam was making up its mind how to vote at the assembly of the States of Holland. All these democratic demands were inextricably mixed up with orangist requests. Rotterdam petitioners also demanded that the stadtholdership should be made hereditary in the house of Orange. The prince unreservedly rejected all their requests although, as we have seen, he reconstructed their council in a much more democratic way than he had done in other towns. To act otherwise, to accept any or all of the points of the democratic programme, would have meant the assumption by the prince of powers that were not his. Nevertheless it cannot be argued that he allowed himself to be primarily guided by considerations of strict legality.

What guided the prince's conduct in the first place was the fact that he was not a democrat, and that he knew it. When, in September, the officers and many members of the militia of Delft petitioned him for a number of changes, he granted their request for a change of magistrates but ignored their other proposals.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the prince met the democratic petitioners a little way and granted a slight modification of existing conditions. This happened in the case of the town of Veere in Zeeland. The prince was marquis of that town, and was under a special obligation towards its citizens because the movement for his restoration had been started by them. We possess the text of a request handed to the magistrates of Veere on September 24th by certain citizens who styled themselves "the deputies of the guilds". It has been printed together with the marginal comments written by the prince, or rather by one of his advisers, on October 3rd.<sup>2</sup> "His Highness", wrote the official, "has agreed to adjudicate upon these requests. . . . He wishes that the aforesaid magistrates as well as the guilds and the citizens of the aforesaid town shall regulate their behaviour precisely in accordance with this ruling". The word "wishes" is significant. In fact the prince's reply was at that moment an order which no one would have dreamed of ignoring; but by conveying his decision in the form of a wish he remained scrupulously within the

<sup>1</sup> This petition and other documents in K 10527. Pamphlets ridiculing this movement: K 10533 and 10538.

<sup>2</sup> K 10578.

law. The annotation to one request said: "His Highness cannot approve of any limitation of the old customs and privileges of his good town of Veere". Another note said: "This article cannot be agreed to as it is contrary to old custom". Certain vague requests such as "that all unseemly intrigues and contracts shall cease" were granted, though in the most carefully chosen words. In this particular case the answer was: "His Highness recommends this point very earnestly as it will lead to greater quiet and unity in the government of the town". The petitioners also dealt with a number of individual cases. They complained, for instance, that a man who had been banished continued to reside at Veere. The answer was: "His Highness approves that this person shall have to obey the order of banishment". In some cases the reply was that the prince left the matter to the prudent discretion of the magistrates.

The Veere petitioners also asked that the lists for the tax of the 500th penny should be open to inspection by delegates from the citizens. This was a decidedly democratic request. The prince decided that henceforth this list was to be sent to him for scrutiny. In other words, he made use of the situation to increase his own influence in a very important aspect of the life of the town, and wherever he saw a chance, he acted in the same manner. One of the requests was that the town should be placed forthwith in a perfect state of defence. The comment was that this must happen at once. Defence, of course, was eminently the department of the captain-general. The tone of the reply, with its scrupulous observance of legality, and its erudite display of the knowledge of privileges, customs and precedents, shows the efficiency of what would nowadays be called the prince's secretariat. But it also proves that the prince had chosen advisers who would see to it that there was no revolutionary break.<sup>1</sup> In Amsterdam, as we have seen, the agitation for a change of magistrate was accompanied by demands for what amounted to the total control of the urban administration by the citizens. This was followed in August by the so-called "request of the rabble", and on September 7th at a meeting of about a hundred citizens, who were mostly artisans, a petition was signed setting out a democratic programme of twelve points. The only concession, however, which was made to all these petitions was the usual modification in the personnel of the magistrates. Some of the most unpopular regents, especially those who had been most

<sup>1</sup> Similar petitions from other Zeeland towns were treated in the same fashion, e.g. K 10579, 10580, 10581. The magistrates sometimes sent counter-petitions in which they refuted the arguments of the democrats: e.g. K 10576.

thorough in their support of De Witt, were made to go, while the middle party and the faction of Valckenier were strengthened. Within a few years, however, Amsterdam showed how superficial the changes had been when it returned to its almost traditional policy of opposition.

By taking the side of the oligarchic authorities against the democratic movement and by securing the continuity of the social fabric of the Republic William III gained the approval of all moderate men. On October 8th the States of Holland voted a general pardon, after which the few social commotions which still occurred were severely repressed and punished. The extreme orangists were in a chastened mood. They were beginning to realise that the enmity of England was not the result of the refusal by the De Witts to raise the prince. They were able to see that the prince's appointment made no difference whatever to the attitude of his uncle Charles II.<sup>1</sup> They had obtained the elevation of the prince, but the regent caste remained in authority and in power. The country was able at last to settle down and to continue with united energy the fight against all its external enemies.

## CHAPTER V

### REPUBLIC OR MONARCHY

THE French onrush was stemmed in 1672 before the whole territory of the Republic was occupied. This was due less to the strategy and leadership of the young prince than to the energy and the enthusiasm of the ordinary Dutch people, of those very people whose democratic aspirations were at the time being disappointed by William III. Towards the end of 1673, the French were compelled to evacuate the territory of the Republic. This time the credit of the success must go, not to the people, but to the prince. In spite of tempting offers by the English whose promises turned the head of the young noblemen of his entourage, William worked indefatigably to isolate Louis XIV and compel him to withdraw for the sake of his own safety. Meanwhile the English had been kept brilliantly at arm's length by the fleet of admiral De Ruyter, the friend of De Witt, whose house was being sacked by the Amsterdam mob while he was saving his country.

<sup>1</sup> *D'Ontroerde Leeuw* (K. 10526), a story of the year 1672 told from a moderate orangist point of view, published towards the end of Nov. 1672.

The English were glad to retire from the war in 1674. Louis also lost his minor continental allies and, still as a result of William III's diplomacy, saw new and important enemies threatening his rear. Peace was made at last in 1678 and it was a peace from which the Dutch Republic emerged without loss. This great and perilous war was won by the united action of the whole nation. It is clear that even the Roman Catholics had ceased by this time to feel as though they formed a state within a state.<sup>1</sup>

When the immediate danger was overcome the supporters of the prince made an attempt to obtain for him the sovereign title of duke of one of the provinces of the Union. This attempt was made with the prince's knowledge and approval. The way in which it was defeated reveals a number of currents and under-currents at work among the Dutch. The traditional monarchism of the majority of the population must have undergone a modification under the influence of the republican doctrines which inspired the leaders of the States party. This again shows that it will not do to dismiss the States party as consisting merely of a handful of people who benefited by the domination of the province of Holland in the Republic. Conditions in the Dutch Republic were never simple. Many people were orangist at heart, although by every rule they should have been opponents of the princes. In the same way the republican tradition of the oligarchs was beginning to be part of the national patrimony and to affect even the orangists. Writing in the 1730s the Dutch historian Wagenaar said that the foolish mob looked upon the stadtholders as the legitimate princes or sovereigns of the country.<sup>2</sup> This is at the very least an exaggeration. The year 1674 shows that even the proletariat of the province of Holland attached importance to its republican freedom. It is true nevertheless that in the seventeenth century, at any rate before the first stadtholderless period, some confusion as to the actual position of the prince existed even in the minds of educated people. We have seen how the famous writer Hooft once called himself "the faithful subject" of the stadtholder Frederic Henry.

When in the autumn of 1673 the French evacuated practically the whole territory of the Republic the provinces which had remained free from invasion insisted that the three liberated provinces of Utrecht, Gelderland and Overysel should not be restored to their

<sup>1</sup> See the diary of a Catholic in occupied Utrecht, 1672 and 1673: E. Booth, *Dagelijksche Aanteekeningen*, ed. Grothe, *Berigten* Utrecht Historical Society, Series II, part I, vol. 2, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *De Tegenwoordige Staat van Nederland*, Vol. I, p. 413.

previous position of sovereign and equal allies in the Union. Holland was the leader in this movement for the abrogation of the Union of Utrecht. This in itself shows how little the appointment of a stadtholder had changed the hearts of the States party, and how, under the one-headed régime, they continued to cling to the principle of decentralisation. It was of course not simply a question of prestige. Holland, Zeeland, Friesland and even Groningen had maritime interests which often clashed with those of the "land provinces". Holland had reasons of its own for wishing to diminish the status of the province of Utrecht. Taxes were lower in this province with the result that for several decades there had been a steady exodus from Holland to Utrecht. The States of Holland would have welcomed a change which gave them a say in the financial arrangements of their neighbour. Moreover, in the course of the defence against the armies of Louis XIV Holland had constructed fortifications which followed the natural configuration of the terrain and took no account of political demarkation. Some of them were within the territory of Utrecht, and Holland wished to bring them under its sovereignty. Here was one of those disputes that proved the advantage of having a natural umpire, a prince who could represent the point of view of the generality and settle the dispute impartially. What happened, however, was that William III made use of the situation to increase his own power.<sup>1</sup> Except for the fact that he allowed a slight rectification of the frontier in favour of Holland, he gave his full support to the lesser provinces and decided that they should resume their former position in the confederation. He made them pay for his support by increasing his influence in the appointment of urban magistrates and of delegates to the provincial States. In Gelderland and in Overysel, where the nobility already depended entirely on him, he now also commanded the vote of the towns. Meanwhile the States of Holland, which were now full of orangists, decided in February 1674 to make his functions in their province hereditary. Zeeland followed this example at once and soon similar action was taken in the other provinces, with the exception of Friesland and Groningen which, according to tradition, had their own stadtholder descended from a brother of William I.

Encouraged by these first successes William considered that the time had arrived to reach out for sovereign powers in the Republic. His advisers considered that the way to achieve this was to obtain in the first place his appointment as duke of Gelderland. Owing to

<sup>1</sup> P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam*, Vol. III, p. 577.

the strong position of the prince in this province it would not be difficult to obtain this dignity for him. After this, the evolution from a republican to a monarchical constitution would have been inevitable. William would no longer be the servant, however exalted, of the States of Gelderland, but their sovereign and master. Moreover, as the States General were merely the emanation or representation of the collective sovereignty of the seven provinces, they would henceforth have been for one-seventh part the emanation of the sovereignty of the duke of Gelderland. Could they have given orders to their captain-general and admiral-general, when he was as much a sovereign as each of the six sovereign provinces of the Union? It was highly unlikely that a practical distinction could have been made between the two functions of the prince. The position would have been too anomalous to last. Eventually it would have been necessary to offer him the sovereignty of every other province. The procedure adopted to make William duke of Gelderland points to the existence of a plan for this gradual extension of his sovereignty.

The orangist leaders decided once more to put into effect the successful plan of campaign of 1672. While the orangists set to work William III kept in the background. The grand pensionary of Holland, Fagel, who was now one of William's staunchest supporters, had relatives in the administration of the Gelderland town of Nimwegen. He also had connections in the provincial States of the duchy.<sup>1</sup> It is more than probable that he sounded these friends and gained their support for the plan. We know, at any rate, that the States of Gelderland were persuaded to offer the ducal dignity to William by relatives of Fagel and by other prominent orangists like Bentinck, who later became earl of Portland. All this could not have taken place without William's knowledge and approval. He was hunting in the province when, early in 1675, the offer was made. He replied that before accepting he would have to consult the States of the other provinces. This surely proves that he was aware of the wider issues involved. Gelderland was a sovereign state, and no permission from other provinces was required. William may have hoped that, apart from expressing their approval, the States of the provinces which he consulted would make a similar offer themselves.

William now wrote to the States of the six provinces and asked for their advice. Utrecht was ready with its reply almost at once. Its government, entirely reorganised by the prince, was composed

<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, Vol. XIV, pp. 345 *sqq.*

of his supporters. They advised the stadtholder to accept the dignity of duke. The States of Holland placed the prince's communication on their agenda. Their deliberations began on February 9th 1675. As we have not had the opportunity so far to observe one of the deliberative assemblies of the Dutch Republic at work, I shall report their debates in some detail. There were nineteen voting members in the assembly of Holland, the nobility and eighteen towns, and they rigorously adhered to their traditional procedure. The grand pensionary informed the States of the agenda of the day. Thereupon the spokesman of the nobility expressed his opinion. He was followed by the spokesman of each town, in the order in which they had received their urban charter. Each spokesman announced whether his principals supported or opposed the proposal, or whether they wished to abstain, and gave reasons for their attitude. Usually the delegations were bound by their instructions. It might happen that a delegation was instructed to agree with the views of the majority. Usually, however, if the view of the majority differed from the instruction given to a delegation, its members had to return to their town to find out whether their principals felt inclined to modify their attitude. There was therefore no genuine debate, but the reasons adduced by each delegation were put down in writing so that the principals might, if necessary, be acquainted with the arguments presented by other delegations.

At the meeting of the States of Holland on February 9th 1675 the spokesman of the nobility announced that he favoured the acceptance of Gelderland's offer by the prince. Dordrecht, the oldest town, supported this vote. It sometimes happened that those delegations which had been given *carte blanche* by their principals decided to follow the example of these senior members.

It was now Haarlem's turn to speak. Haarlem was the town of Fagel, who had organised the whole affair. But its spokesman said that his town had heard of the proposal with regret. Every single province, he said, depended in a way upon all the others. Therefore the question of whether a province had the right to give up its sovereignty deserved to be thrashed out most thoroughly. Was not the position of stadtholder, he asked, more to the prince's advantage than that of sovereign? Gelderland, which was now making this offer, had submitted rather easily to the French invaders. Could one, after this, place much confidence in its judgment? These socratic questions prepared the way for the conclusion that the prince should be advised to decline Gelderland's offer. Delft,

which followed, was also hostile to the proposal. Gelderland, said its representative, was well advised in showing its gratitude to the prince who had delivered it. What else had this province to offer, apart from its sovereignty? But precedents showed that it was illegal to make such an offer, and for this reason Delft had to oppose its acceptance. Leyden also pronounced against the offer and gave the somewhat far-fetched reason that if he became a sovereign taxes would have to be levied by the prince instead of by the regents, which would make him unpopular.

Although owing to the later date at which it had obtained its charter Amsterdam was the sixth town to vote, its opinion carried considerable weight. It condemned the proposal. Gouda managed to dress up an unfavourable vote as though it were favourable. Its spokesman announced that it was in favour of the acceptance of the offer, but he added that his principals doubted whether Gelderland had the right to give up its sovereignty, and remarked that the sovereignty of Gelderland was not a very valuable gift. Rotterdam, where the change of magistrates in 1672 had been particularly thorough and which was strongly orangist, announced that it would support any decision reached unanimously. Otherwise it wished to be counted among the supporters of the proposal. This somewhat vague utterance could hardly be interpreted as vigorous support for the proposition. Gorcum not only opposed the offer, but added that if the prince were to accept it the States would have to investigate every implication of his action. After this spate of opposition came a succession of favourable votes, but they were those of less important towns. Schiedam was so vague that the other delegates wondered whether it had voted for or against the proposal. Schoonhoven supported its favourable vote with the observation that all noble houses aspire to great titles, and that the house of Nassau had ruled for more than two centuries over the duchy of Gelderland. Den Briel voted in favour. So did Alkmaar, but its spokesman spoiled the effect of its vote by remarking that the people liked at any rate a semblance of freedom. Hoorn was in favour of the proposal, Enkhuizen against; Edam was in favour, Monikkendam against. Both Medemblik and Purmerend were against. A counting of heads would therefore have shown that six towns supported the proposal, that another four were reluctantly in favour, one was undecided and seven were against. Among the opponents were some of the towns that had been most active in favour of the prince in 1672. It was decided in consequence not to draw up a resolution. Instead, the prince was to be informed of the



sentiments of each of the members of the States of Holland. This amounted to the defeat of the proposal to approve the acceptance of the title of duke of Gelderland by William III.

The States of Zeeland held their debate a few days later, and the outcome was much the same. The most remarkable feature of the debate was the outspoken hostility of the town of Veere where the orangist counter-revolution of 1672 had broken out. Though always an orangist stronghold, Zeeland went further than Holland. It had the courage to advise the prince to reject Gelderland's offer, and told William that he ought to follow the example of Gideon when Israel made a similar offer to him after its liberation from the Midianites. It is clear that to take such a strong stand the orangist magistrates of Zeeland must have felt very sure indeed of the support of the common people. They knew that notwithstanding their strong love for the princes of Orange, the ordinary citizens disliked monarchy as much as the Romans, whose emperors never dared to assume the title of king. The States, in this instance, were the mouthpiece of the people. But something had happened to the people. We have noted before how the orangist pamphleteers toned down their claims during the stadtholderless period. Republican propaganda, it is clear, had also affected the masses during this period. They were as orangist as they had ever been. But they knew now that they wanted a stadtholder and captain-general, not a monarch.

William III was a realist. He knew that he was beaten. As soon as the letter from the States of Zeeland, dated February 15th 1675, reached him, he went to Gelderland, accompanied by the grand pensionary of Holland. On February 20th he announced that he would not accept the ducal dignity, but that he accepted the alternative offer of the hereditary stadtholdership of Gelderland. He made further changes in the government of the province which increased his power still further. He was unable, however, to hide his profound disappointment at the turn of events. He thanked the States of Utrecht for having supported the offer made by Gelderland, and declared that "he had noted with much pleasure how they had not felt their suspicions aroused by the proposal, as had been the case in other provinces, where it had been given out that he was concerned solely with his own aggrandisement". In the middle of March he wrote to the States of Zeeland. He told them how aggrieved he was at the distrust shown towards him by their province. The suspicion that he had aimed at the sovereignty of the country was loathsome and wicked, he declared. He assured them

that he had shown a greater care for the freedom and the privileges of their towns than the States party had ever done, and recited all the services he had rendered during the present war. He reminded the States that he had tried to subdue the rebelliousness of citizens who wanted to overthrow all their magistrates without exception, and entered into a lengthy discussion of the story of Gideon to which the States had referred in their message to him. To compare the people of 1672 with the people of God was a mistake, he wrote. The Dutch nation valued God's inheritance much less than did the Israelites. William's letter to the States of Zeeland was printed and circulated as a pamphlet. It failed to persuade the ordinary people that he had not tried to become sovereign of the Dutch state. In the end the States of Holland had to issue an edict forbidding under pain of death to state in print or even by word of mouth that the prince had ever aimed at the sovereignty of the Union.

The defeat of William's aspirations to sovereignty was a blessing for himself and for his country. However great the need for centralisation, the time had not come for it to be achieved through the establishment of a monarchy. Absolutism would have been as repellent to the Dutch of the seventeenth century as it was to their ancestors of the sixteenth, while a limited monarchy would have presented almost as many difficulties as the existing régime with its perpetual tension and disagreement. We have seen that in the matter of foreign policy the integral application of William's system would have been as perilous for the state as the integral application of the system of the regents. If William had been absolute sovereign the country might have been lost by following his lead. It was only through a compromise that the golden mean of security was achieved. Compromise was more easily reached under the cumbersome régime of decentralisation and dual leadership than it could have been in any other circumstances.

The story of William's defeat has other implications still. The position of primacy in an oligarchic republic corresponded more closely to William's instinct than a sovereignty rooted in popular support. Every one of his actions showed that he was not a man of the people. He was attached with every fibre to the social structure of the Republic. The dictatorship of the upper middle class was for him the only acceptable régime, and he never displayed any sympathy with the political and social aspirations of the lesser men. An insignificant event of the last year of the war against France underlined afresh the divergence between the dreams of the prince's popular supporters and his own outlook. We do not often hear of

social disturbances in the Dutch Republic, which usually enjoyed a high degree of prosperity. But the war weighed heavily upon the country, trade and industry suffered, taxation was crushing. Moreover, a few years only had elapsed since the orangist risings against the urban magistrates, and the lower orders did not always clearly distinguish between political and social opposition to the regents. In 1678 the States of Holland introduced a new system for assessing the tax upon peat. The populace in the district of the Zaan, north of Amsterdam, where there were several peat markets, considered the new method to be unfair. There were riots at Oostzaandam, and the house of the collector of the peat-tax was plundered. The local authorities thereupon decided to return to the old system, but the people looked upon this as a sign of weakness on the part of the magistrates, and cried that the time had come for all taxes to be abolished. They attacked the houses of the rich, and in some cases they had to be pacified with gifts of tobacco and wine. Their ringleaders displayed an old parchment bearing a seal, and said that it was an order from the prince abolishing all taxes and dismissing the tax collectors.<sup>1</sup> The riots spread to the neighbouring villages. Needless to say, they were eventually suppressed by the armed forces; the leaders were arrested, four men were hanged, and others received a whipping. What lends importance to this event is the fact that the rioters imagined that the prince was their leader in a far-reaching social revolution.

In the sphere of religion William also disappointed his popular supporters. When he attained power, the orthodox expected a repetition of the events that followed the coup d'Etat of prince Maurice. The prince was known to favour orthodox calvinism. The clergy were among the most zealous supporters of the campaign that carried him into office. It is true that in the early days of his magistrature William sided with the orthodox against latitudinarian and liberal divines. He also took their side against the regents who, even after the orangist triumph, continued to claim that the church was subordinate to the civil authorities. Even at this period, however, there was one occasion when William opposed the calvinists. It was after the liberation of Utrecht where, during the French occupation, the Roman catholics had been allowed to worship in public. The calvinists tried to have their revenge, but William prevented any victimisation. Generally speaking William's treatment of religious matters showed a close connection with his foreign policy. During the war of 1672-1678 the calvinists looked upon

<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, Vol. XIV, pp. 473-476.

the French and their king as the successors of Spain and the enemies of the true reformed religion, and supported the stadtholder's war policy. At a later stage, however, the catholic emperor became William's ally, and in 1688 even the pope was on his side. Gradually William ceased to support intolerant orthodoxy. In 1694 the States of Holland forbade all ministers to preach that man's salvation or the true interpretation of scripture could be affected by points left undecided by the synod of Dordrecht. William gave public approval to this resolution, which also imposed upon those who appointed new ministers the duty of paying attention solely to the moderate and peaceful character of the candidates.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that William had emancipated himself from his popular supporters in yet another respect.

## CHAPTER VI

## NO STADTHOLDER—AND NO CHANGE

WILLIAM III died on March 8th 1702. Without bloodshed or revolution, but also without hesitation, the five provinces of which he had been first magistrate reverted to the stadtholderless régime that existed before his appointment. The States of Holland passed a resolution calling for unity and for the fulfilment of all treaty obligations, but breathed not a word of the succession, although there was a candidate in the person of John William Friso, the young stadtholder of Friesland. The other provinces followed suit. Quietly and gradually the regents of the States party who had been expelled from office and were still alive found their way back into the administrations of the towns of Holland. In Zeeland too it was mainly those who had been dispossessed of their offices, or their relatives whom the orangists had kept from power, who gave their most active support to the change of régime. But in this province, as well as in Gelderland and Overysel, the main impetus came from an unexpected quarter. In Middelburg, for instance, the administration was changed by the ancient guilds, and in the two other provinces it was the colleges of common people, who at one time elected the magistrates, who now insisted upon changes in the personnel of the town administra-

<sup>1</sup> Geyl, *Nederlandse Stam*, Vol. II, p. 581; III, p. 21.

tions. This is indeed a far cry from the customary identification of orangism and democracy. The democratic interests, whose lingering prerogatives had been systematically abrogated by William III, did not scruple to reap the benefit of an anti-orangist change. But the time for democracy was not yet. The victory of the common people proved illusory, and soon the Dutch Republic settled down to a consolidated dictatorship of the upper middle class. The only difference between this period and that of William III was that contracts of correspondence were concluded by other groups of men belonging to the same social milieu.

The continuity that marked the social system also characterised the conduct of the affairs of the Generality. The central government was in the hands of Slingelandt, secretary of the council of state, François Fagel, greffier of the States General, and Jacob Hop, treasurer-general of the Union. More influential even than these Generality officials was Anthony Heinsius, the grand pensionary of the province of Holland, which quietly resumed its position of primacy in the Republic. Heinsius was indeed the incarnation of the spirit of continuity. In the course of a lifetime he himself changed only once, when he left the States party to become a supporter of William III. He was born of a regent family of Delft, visited the Latin school of his native town and the university of Orleans, and became a lawyer. In 1679 he was made pensionary of Delft. Like most of the Delft oligarchs he sympathised with the party of the States, though he managed to keep his views sufficiently to himself not to be disqualified for office. In 1683 he was sent on a mission to France. He was so struck by the tone that prevailed at Versailles, by the boastfulness and arrogance of the French nobility, and by the signs which pointed to further aggression on the part of Louis XIV, that he realised there was no alternative to William III's foreign policy. Within a few years he was among the most devoted supporters of the stadtholder. In 1689 William was able to persuade him to accept the position of grand pensionary of Holland which had become vacant.

Generally speaking, the power and influence of a grand pensionary stood in inverse ratio to those of the stadtholder. In the case of Heinsius, the opposite was the case. William possessed the essential virtue of a great leader: he was able to delegate. To the first civil officer of the province of Holland he delegated more and more. William never trusted his English ministers completely. What he discussed with them had already been thoroughly thrashed out by his Dutch friends and talked over with them or dealt with by corres-

pondence. It was not generally realised that William rarely took a decision affecting foreign affairs without consulting Heinsius.<sup>1</sup> In this way Heinsius became so familiar with the international system of the king-stadtholder, that it is often difficult to be certain whether a particular line of action originated with the stadtholder or with the pensionary. There exists a letter from Heinsius to William III, dated June 6th 1698, in which he explained with much emphasis the need for a collective guarantee among European rulers.<sup>2</sup> Feeling that William's authority covered him, Heinsius often took important decisions by himself.<sup>3</sup> Thus, when William disappeared, Heinsius lost a colleague and a friend with whom he saw eye to eye, rather than a master. He continued to conduct the foreign policy of the Republic according to the principles which he had in common with William III. In domestic affairs the same continuity was possible, for William had discovered long ago that the best results could be achieved by tolerating the federalism and decentralisation dear to the States party.<sup>4</sup> This is why it was possible to effect the transition to a stadtholderless régime with so little upheaval.

In theory Heinsius was the legal adviser and factotum of the province of Holland. But the regents of Holland trusted him, and allowed him to act as though he were not only their prime minister, but the prime minister of the whole Republic. In dealing with foreign affairs Heinsius was assisted by a committee consisting of one deputy from each of the seven provinces. He discussed matters of state with this committee, but frequently also in private conversation with its individual members. He was expected to let them into all his secrets, although he often succeeded in avoiding excessive confidences. In keeping the other provinces at arm's length he could rely upon the support of the towns of Holland, and in particular upon that of Amsterdam,<sup>5</sup> where the principle of Holland's primacy in the Republic was taken very seriously. This method, however, involved him in further conversations and correspondence with regents from the towns of Holland. Occasionally other provinces showed themselves jealous because the *Heeren* of Holland treated affairs of the highest importance without consulting their provincial colleagues.<sup>6</sup> After one such complaint he received a

<sup>1</sup> O. Klopp, *Der Fall des Hauses Stuart*, Vol. VII, pp. 65 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> The Hague. Quoted in Legrelle, *La Guerre de la Succession d'Espagne*, Vol. II, pp. 344, *q.v.*

<sup>3</sup> Klopp, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 386-387.

<sup>4</sup> Von Noorden, *Europäische Geschichte*, I, *Der Spanische Erbfolgekrieg*, Vol. I, pp. 341-2.

<sup>5</sup> Rijksarchief, The Hague: *Archief Heinsius*, folder 1386, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> *Archief Heinsius*, folder 1451, June 8th 1709.

letter from one of the Amsterdam magistrates, who wrote: "Burgomasters consider that as the minister of this province and as the deputy of the States of Holland to the Generality you owe no account of your conduct to anyone but the States of Holland, and therefore not to the *Heeren* of Utrecht or of any other province. But",—and here again appears the spirit of compromise that compensated so largely for the shortcomings of the Dutch constitution,—“in this particular case the question is not *quid juris sit*, but what is useful. We must see to it that Utrecht does not bring the matter before the Generality. Submit courteously that a better channel is available. You will gain time and you will mollify them. Your long experience will, the burgomasters think, enable you to handle the matter in the right way”.<sup>1</sup>

In actual fact Heinsius was able to make of his ministry not only an office of trust, but one of power. He turned the drawbacks of his constitutional position into a useful weapon. As a true Hollander, he disliked action that was not based upon mature reflection, and he had a congenital disinclination to speak the thing that is not. If pressed for a decision, or if cornered into a position from which he could not escape without either revealing a secret or telling a lie, he apologetically reminded his visitor of his difficult position and of his constitutional duty to consult his principals before acting. Whenever this stage had been reached, those who were transacting business with him knew that the time had come to take their leave.<sup>2</sup> In 1711 Lord Orrery, then English plenipotentiary in Brussels, wrote to the secretary of State St John: "If I am not mistaken in this gentleman, it would not have been easy to have made the necessary impressions upon him in one conversation, which was all I had or cou'd well have with him whilst I staid there" (i.e. at The Hague). "For as far as I have observ'd conferences are things so habitual to him, he is naturally so flegmatick, his parts which perhaps were never the quickest must probably now by his great age be so impair'd, and he is so distracted with the weight as well as variety of bus'ness, that I question whether it wou'd not be a better method of dealing with in writing the reasons of 'em fully explain'd and clearly deduc'd, than only to talk with him upon 'em in conversation".<sup>3</sup>

Heinsius was seventy when Orrery wrote this despatch. But it was not age that had made him cautious. He conversed in this

<sup>1</sup> Buys to Heinsius, March 3rd 1709. *Archief Heinsius*, 1386.

<sup>2</sup> See the interesting character sketch of Heinsius in von Noorden, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 208-18.

<sup>3</sup> Aug. 27th 1711. Public Record Office, *State Papers Flanders*, 60.

manner throughout his life. He liked to jot down a few notes, which he afterwards worked into one of the innumerable memoranda or letters he addressed to his many correspondents, ambassadors and agents, generals and deputies with the armies, foreign rulers and statesmen. As a rule he did not dictate his letters. He wrote the draft which was copied by his clerk. His handwriting and his spelling were old-fashioned: they betrayed the man with little flexibility, with a set and immutable scheme of life. Had he not always been in a hurry when he wrote, he would, the reader of his manuscript correspondence feels, have produced an unbearably precise and tidy script, that of a man who will never run into debt and will never be caught short of ready cash.<sup>1</sup> He remained a bachelor all his life, living unostentatiously, though on a much ampler scale than the regents of the first stadtholderless period. The house he rented was large and beautifully furnished, and was run for him by a housekeeper with two maids and two men servants. There was a gardener and a coachman.<sup>2</sup> Heinsius arrived early at his office, and stayed there till late. Even at home he busied himself with affairs of state and received official visits. He lived entirely for his work.

As the years went by, Heinsius made his peace with the fact that he was the servant of a stadtholderless régime. The regents did not impede his diplomatic work, he was able to devote himself to international affairs with the same effectiveness as in the days of the stadtholder. In his mechanical and unimaginative way he drew the conclusion that the system of freedom had its advantages. A few times, in the course of correspondence with intimate collaborators, he permitted himself some praise of the new régime.<sup>3</sup> But he touched upon such topics with an obvious lack of warmth. He never liked to theorise about his own views: the whole of his voluminous correspondence is strikingly non-committal from the point of view of general principles. In one respect his admiration for the first stadtholderless régime was as outspoken as it was unbounded: he modelled himself upon John De Witt and studied the mechanism of his system of government in the archives of his great predecessor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When he died, Heinsius left nearly three-quarters of a million guilders. In his house were found 59 bags containing 600 guilders each, 5 bags containing 275 guilders each, 2,730 guilders in gold coin, and 777 guilders in other coin, a total of over 40,000 guilders. His annual income from his various offices was 17,152 guilders. He made another 1,200 guilders per annum as a director of the East India Company. *Archief Heinsius*, 2375.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Heinsius to Count van Rechteren, Jan. 7th 1710. *Archief Heinsius*, 1572.

<sup>4</sup> *Archief Heinsius*, *passim*. He did this even in the days of William III. See Klopp, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 368, for an instance which occurred in 1699.



Whatever may have been Heinsius's own feelings about the best form of government for the Republic, his conception of international affairs remained the same throughout his term of office. He never forsook the principles which he had acquired during his formative years. They were evolved by him and by William III, who, let it be remembered, was himself influenced in his youth by his conversations with John De Witt. For Heinsius the paramount rule of foreign policy was distrust of Louis XIV, and its corollary was that the Republic must be sufficiently strong not to have to add fear to distrust. Louis aspired to what his contemporaries called "universal monarchy". He saw himself as the heir of Charlemagne. Everyone knew that reason of state was his sole consideration, and that he did not consider himself bound by his pledged word. No treaty could arrest his expansionist policy, and force was the only means of holding him in check. As he was the most powerful monarch in Christendom, it was folly to resist him single-handed. The only practical method of dealing with him was that of collective security. William built up three successive European coalitions which were actually able to circumscribe the menace from France. When he died, the Republic was on the point of becoming involved in the greatest war since the birth of national states, the war of the Spanish Succession, and to take an active part in the attempt to defeat Louis' final bid for universal monarchy. Before his death William was able to secure the continuation of his policy. In England he converted his former opponent Marlborough to his system of collective security, and left him in charge of military and diplomatic affairs. The Republic had Heinsius.

It took Louis XIV and his diplomatic service many years to realise that nothing had changed in the Dutch Republic. The foreign policy of France was organised in an almost scientific way, and was far ahead of the age in its business methods and filing, its intelligence service and its propaganda. Yet, as the instructions issued to French ambassadors and envoys to the Dutch Republic show, Versailles had entirely lost touch with Dutch realities during the recent nine years' war (1688-97). Although the king himself admitted that the long interruption of diplomatic relations made objective judgments difficult, he hazarded the opinion, immediately upon the end of the war, that William's sole purpose in waging war had been to consolidate his authority in the Republic. In 1698 we see Louis wondering whether William's credit in the Republic was not bound to decrease, now that the nine years' war was over. Within three months the French had discovered that William was

still master in the land of his birth. However, another hope remained. Would not the death of William, who had one foot in the grave, bring about a complete change in the Republic? Louis was encouraged in this hope by a report from his ambassador Bonrepaus, written in December 1699 after a short stay in Holland. The governing party, said the ambassador, depended entirely upon the support of the king of England. If he died, its leaders might well share the fate of the De Witts. Not even Heinsius would be allowed to stay in office. The Dutch were sure to go to war with England and to form the closest alliance with France. Similar intelligence was provided by the next French envoy. "The authority of the king of England is so great in Holland", wrote d'Avaux in February 1701, "that it would be dangerous for private persons to admit the extent to which the union with England smacks of compulsion, and how short-lived it would be if the king of England came to disappear". War broke out, and still the French did not realise their mistake. They continued to believe that there was a strong pro-French party to which war by the side of England was anathema, but which was cowed into submission. They were, the French imagined, staunch republicans and lovers of freedom, who were afraid that if the war continued another stadtholder would be appointed.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the war of the Spanish Succession differences of opinion arose in the Dutch Republic. But they were concerned only with the question whether at any given moment a satisfactory peace could be obtained, and whether attention should be paid to the incessant overtures that were being made by Louis XIV. About the aims of the war, and the reasons for carrying it on, there were no divergent views. On May 15th 1702, the Dutch Republic, England and the Empire declared war on France simultaneously. The Dutch Republic issued a proclamation which was a genuine expression of the motives of its leaders. It stated that as in 1672, Louis was threatening the existence of the Republic because it was an obstacle on his way to universal monarchy; that by aiming at a union between France and Spain, so thorough that the two countries would form one realm, he was laying the foundation for this universal monarchy; and that it was impossible to place any trust in a treaty concluded with the king of France.<sup>2</sup> This distrust of France, together with a constant preoccupation with "the indivisibility of the peace", was the keynote of Heinsius's foreign policy for many years to come.

<sup>1</sup> *Recueil des Instructions aux Ambassadeurs de France, Hollande*, Vol. II, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Klopp, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 64-65.

All the members of the Grand Alliance paid lip service to "the indivisibility of the peace", as collective security was called in those days. This conception was, however, not sufficiently familiar to the statesmen of the beginning of the eighteenth century. Their pre-occupation was with the policy of the balance, by which they meant a system of temporary alliances for subduing any power which threatened to grow stronger than any of the other powers. Even this system was moribund. To begin with, the threat of a French hegemony was disappearing. Contemporaries did not yet realise to what extent France had been bled white by Louis' adventures, though they were going to find it out within a few years. No country was prepared to take up the succession of France, and to embark upon a new attempt to dominate Europe. Moreover, the system of the balance through combination against a dominating power belonged to the age when the acquisition of power was the prime motive of international policy. But economic interest was rapidly becoming the leading preoccupation of statesmen, and the war of the Spanish Succession was itself inspired to a considerable extent by commercial considerations, however indifferent William III, Heinsius and Marlborough may have been to them. Modern capitalism was improving its organisation, the economic power of the bourgeoisie was increasing with rapid strides, and even the Hapsburg dominions were becoming commercially minded.

The European states were on the point of discovering that the age when one of them was a threat to all had come to an end. As everyone was out for selfish gain, everyone was the potential enemy of everyone else. As a result, the words "preserving the balance" were soon to acquire a new meaning. They would involve the keeping of a careful watch upon each of one's neighbours, to prevent that he should grow stronger than oneself.

An early manifestation of this new tendency can be observed in the behaviour of the new tory government of England which, in spite of the stipulations of the Grand Alliance, opened negotiations with France behind the back of its allies, and left them in the lurch after reaching an understanding with the enemy. Faithful to the end to the conception of the "undivided peace", Heinsius failed to read the signs of the time. His stubborn loyalty to old ideals, his determination to achieve the original aims of the war, provided those who betrayed him and his country with a plausible excuse for their action.

Before the tory betrayal a fair chance presented itself of making a peace which would have secured Western Europe against any

further threat from France. But the greed of the Austrian empire, the fear and distrust of Heinsius and the Dutch, which was fully shared by their English allies, caused the negotiations of 1709 and 1710 to fail. It is to these negotiations that the tory apologists afterwards pointed to justify their desertion. They said that the failure of the negotiations was due primarily to Dutch greed and obstinacy. Recently attempts have been made to refute this tory justification, and to prove that the Dutch, who were desperately keen on making peace, acted merely as the cat's-paws of their allies and were not at all responsible for the failure of the negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

The actual story of the negotiations of 1709 and 1710 does not show the Dutch in the role of cat's-paws or victims. To the defeat of the French armies in 1708 succeeded one of the severest winters in human memory. France suffered from famine as well as from financial exhaustion. Louis, whose plight was desperate, made approaches to the allies. Negotiations began in 1709, and the allies presented the French with preliminaries of peace, one of which consisted in a demand that the king of France should compel his great-grandson Philip to give up the throne of Spain on which he had placed him. Philip had become a popular king. To make him leave his country against his will and that of his subjects would have made it necessary for Louis to take military action against him. Louis XIV was not prepared to do this, and negotiations were broken off. The following year, in 1710, they were resumed. Attempts were made to reach a compromise which would save the face of the French king. His envoys were made to stay at Geertruydenberg in Dutch Brabant, and contact with them, on behalf of all the allies, was kept up by the two Dutch regents Buys and Van der Dussen. After protracted negotiations it proved impossible once more to reach an understanding.

There can be no doubt that in 1709 and 1710 the British leader Marlborough was himself far from bellicose, although the contrary has often been asserted. To begin with, as Mr. Churchill has established in his biography of Marlborough, he wanted peace with France in 1709, "leaving Spain, if necessary, to be dealt with separately later".<sup>2</sup> The other members of the British government

<sup>1</sup> Geyl, *Moderne Historische Apologetiek in Engeland* (1926), and *Nederland's Staatskunde in de Spaanse Successie-Oorlog* (1929), both republished in *Kernproblemen van onze Geschiedenis* (1937). See also his *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam*, III, p. 99-118. I hope to publish a study of these negotiations based upon material from the *Archief Heinsius* at The Hague, and from the P.R.O. in London.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, *Marlborough*, Vol. IV, p. 85 *sqq.* In an undated note to Heinsius Marlborough said: "In publick I durst not be of any other opinion then what I write to Ld.

were less ready to make peace. Heinsius failed to listen to Marlborough's repeated promptings. He did not believe that peace was possible at the time. At the beginning of the year 1709 he wrote to his friends in Amsterdam: "Mons. Bernieres has said among other things that the king and his ministers did not believe that I was greatly inclined towards peace, which, coming from our enemies, I do not look upon as a dishonour, nor harmful to the Republic".<sup>1</sup> Later he wrote to Marlborough himself that he could not see why the French made so much noise about the coming peace, "unless they believe it will appease their people and cause dissension among the allies".<sup>2</sup> Heinsius considered that Louis should really be compelled to send his armies to Spain to expel his grandson, because otherwise France would have the advantages of peace while the allies would still be engaged in a long war in Spain and the Indies.<sup>3</sup> Heinsius continually referred to the "indivisibility of the peace". Annoyed by attempts the English had made to acquire for themselves special privileges and concessions in Spain, he reasserted the theory that the aim of the alliance was to acquire for Austria "the Spanish monarchy entire".<sup>4</sup>

In examining the attitude adopted by the Dutch Republic one should avoid the error made by the French themselves. It is perfectly true that there was opposition in the Republic to Heinsius's bellicose policy, but whether or not one considers that Heinsius had a strong character, one cannot deny the fact that he was persuasive. He was able to convince the leaders of Dutch foreign policy that France was still untrustworthy, that she was insincere, and that she must be compelled to carry out to the letter even the most obnoxious clauses in the peace preliminaries. In December 1709 the members of the secret commission on foreign affairs examined all the reports and correspondence concerning the past negotiations. The deputies reported unanimously to the States General that "the bases agreed with the allies must be adhered to". This report, dated December 9th 1709, formed the subject

Townshend, but to you as a friend I will frankly own that I think it very unreasonable to presse France to do so treacherous a thing as to deliver towns in Spain. . . . If I cou'd flatter myself that Holland were willing and able to continue for three years longer the warr you might then reject what is now propos'd and be assur'd that in that time with the blessing of the Almighty you might impose what conditions you shou'd think fitt . . ."

(*Archief Heinsius*, 85).

<sup>1</sup> To Buys, Jan. 30th 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 1461).

<sup>2</sup> March 26th 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 86).

<sup>3</sup> Heinsius to Goslinga, Aug. 12th 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 1468).

<sup>4</sup> Heinsius to Vrijberg, Dutch Ambassador in London, Sept. 3rd 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 125).

of a secret debate by the States General on December 14th. The States General agreed, also unanimously, that the report must be accepted and acted upon. It was decided to inform the States of all the seven provinces that "the enemy was not yet truly in earnest about reaching a good and assured peace, . . . but everything has been much more directed, wherever possible, to bring about among the allies and in the Republic distrust and disunity". The message to the provinces further pointed out that information from every quarter proved that the French were continuing intense war preparations. It was wise and prudent, therefore, not to be misled by French protestations, but to continue preparations for war and not to allow the advantages already obtained to slip away from the grasp of the allies.<sup>1</sup> A few days later Heinsius wrote to the Dutch ambassador in London that this resolution had indeed been "very unanimous".<sup>2</sup> On the same day the British ambassador at The Hague, Townshend, reported: "This evening the resolution was communicated to all the foreign ministers residing here at a conference where they were desired by the deputys to acquaint their respective masters with it and to exhort them to use their utmost endeavours in prosecuting the war".<sup>3</sup> One after the other the States of the various provinces expressed their approval of the resolution of December 14th.<sup>4</sup>

The same story could be told of the negotiations of 1710. Heinsius continued to receive reports from his secret agents which convinced him that Philip's position in Spain was weak and that Louis could easily expel him from the country.<sup>5</sup> He considered, therefore, that there was no reason for allowing Louis not to perform the humiliating task of expelling Philip from Spain, and fully agreed with the bellicose attitude of the Austrians and of the English. The conclusion is that the Dutch acted with conviction and not merely as the agents of the other allies, and that the main reason for this conviction was the persuasiveness of Heinsius and the latter's belief in the absolute "indivisibility of the peace".

<sup>1</sup> Secret Resolutions of the States General, in *Archief Heinsius*.

<sup>2</sup> Dec. 17th 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 125).

<sup>3</sup> Public Record Office, *State Papers Holland*, 233.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Townshend, Dec. 31st 1709, *ibid.* See also Van Welderen to Heinsius, Dec. 28th 1709 (*Arch. Heins.* 1453).

<sup>5</sup> See a report on the repercussion in Spain of the fall of Douai, dated July 19th 1710 (*Arch. Heins.* 1549).

## CHAPTER VII

## THE DEMOCRATS AGAINST THE PRINCE

THE war of the Spanish Succession marks an important moment in the history of the Dutch nation. Before this war the Dutch Republic was one of the great powers of Europe. By the end of the war the Dutch found themselves exhausted and their country had become a second-rate power, destined to be a mere satellite of England. In the course of the eighteenth century it became clear that the decline was economic as well as political. It is difficult to attribute a precise date to the beginning of this process. Some economic historians place it at the end of the war of the Spanish Succession, others much later, as late even as the fourth Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-84. Economic decline evidently did not set in at a precise date. Processes of this nature are gradual and for some time imperceptible, till suddenly their effects are there for all to see. If the outcome of the war of the Spanish Succession was a shock for Dutch pride, its aftermath was catastrophic for the country's finances.<sup>1</sup> During the war the Dutch Republic bled itself white. In 1713 the number of Dutch troops in the Southern Netherlands was 130,000, a very considerable figure indeed, and the expenses entailed by this military effort were colossal. The debt of the Dutch Republic, which amounted to thirty million guilders in 1688, rose to one hundred and forty-eight million at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. To cope with their increasing military commitments the Dutch had to neglect their navy, and this made their English ally mistress of the seas. Moreover, during the eighteenth century, the Dutch continued, much against their own inclination, to play the part of a great power in conjunction with England. Meanwhile neutrals like Bremen, Hamburg and Denmark were able to capture more and more of the Dutch carrying trade.

Contemporary pamphleteers complained bitterly about the decay of Dutch commerce. The admiralties, which financed the country's naval activities with the proceeds of duties on mercantile shipping declared that owing to the decline of shipping their income

<sup>1</sup> Just before the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession the population of the Dutch Republic was about 2,200,000, while that of France was about 14,000,000 and that of England about 7,000,000. Political arithmeticians, those ancestors of our statisticians, estimated the actual national income of these countries as follows: France £81 to 84 million, England £43 to 44 million, Dutch Republic £17 to 18 million (von Noorden, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 67 *sqq.*).

had been reduced to such an extent that they could not make both ends meet. Everywhere people complained that they could not afford to pay their taxes. Yet there was another side to the economic picture. Although the Mediterranean trade had almost become an English monopoly, the Dutch kept their hold on the trade with France in which the English were hardly interested. Dutch shipping still did very well in the Baltic, and Dutch enterprise flourished in the East and in the West Indies. It is true that industry had declined in the province of Holland. But this was to a considerable extent the fault of the industrialists of this province, who, as we mentioned before, were transferring their works to Dutch Brabant where the urban guild regulations did not apply. Meanwhile the accumulated capital, fruit of self-denial and economy as much as of ceaseless endeavour, which had so often been left unemployed in the previous century, was becoming increasingly utilisable. Foreign investment, to be sure, was not unknown in the seventeenth century, but now the habit of placing capital abroad became general. Both at home and abroad, it was lent to bankers and to brokers of commercial bills. Dividends from abroad found their way back in the shape of goods which brought profits to the traders who handled them. Amsterdam, the money market of the world, saw the rise of vast new fortunes for which their owners had neither worked nor economised. The easier methods of high finance offered less inducement to save. The display of luxury was no longer looked upon as a sign of bad taste, and wealthy financiers built themselves sumptuous country residences to which they travelled in magnificent pleasure yachts. Their women dressed in velvets and silver brocades and wore pearls and precious stones. The contrast between wealth and poverty, toned down in the golden century as a matter of good form, now became visible to all. Moreover, while in the seventeenth century almost every member of the community participated in the collective prosperity, large portions of the population now failed to receive their share.

The Dutch, however, did not realise at the time that the country's wealth was being redistributed rather than lost. At the peak of their prosperity they were undoubtedly the leading nation, envied by the English and by the French. Now the flags of many nations competed with their own, and their monopoly of the carrying trade was lost. Under the influence of mercantilist doctrines the people imagined that their neighbour's gain was their own loss. If the trade of others prospered the Dutch felt sure that their own trade was in a bad way. In short, it would appear that the decline



which set in during the second stadtholderless period was of a psychological and moral rather than of an economic nature. Whereas in the past the Dutch, with their small population and their slight resources, behaved like a great power, though nature had not destined them for the role, they now became incapable as a nation of bearing the burden of power. They lost their reckless energy and, like the first man after his sin, they saw that they were naked. They lost their nerve when they saw themselves betrayed by their English ally. Like the Italians after the first World War, they felt that they had been cheated of the fruits of victory. Their moral fibre became affected, and in the midst of despondency and indifference corruption and self-seeking grew. The difficulty of raising taxes resulted less from the lack of money than from reluctance to pay. In ship-building, which had been one of the leading industries of the Republic, a qualitative decline set in. The skill of Dutch shipwrights was famous throughout Europe. In 1697 the Russian czar Peter the Great came to learn the secrets of Dutch technique at the yards of Zaandam. But in 1727 Amsterdam had to send for English shipwrights.<sup>1</sup>

The public spirit of the regents and their administrative skill were gravely affected by the universal moral decline of the period. The urban regents of the age of De Witt may have been autocrats, but they were competent and devoted to duty. Now power ceased to carry with it a sense of responsibility. As haughty as the most arrogant of French noblemen, the eighteenth century regent looked down upon the masses. The virus of the "contracts of correspondence" spread, and from being an exception these agreements became the rule throughout the Republic. Nepotism became an institution, and venality was no longer hidden from the public eye. The defects of the Dutch constitution made themselves felt more acutely as the corrective of common sense and goodwill ceased to operate. Responsibility was avoided, action eschewed, while, in view of the universal demoralisation of the ruling caste, the lack of secrecy inherent in the system grew into a public danger. All the reproaches which nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics of the States party are in the habit of addressing to the oligarchs of the age of De Witt are deserved by the masters of the *pruikentijd*, the age of periwigs. Government was reduced to a succession of conferences between people who were afraid to commit themselves. The pro-

<sup>1</sup> Elias, *Geschiedenis van het Amsterdamsche Regentenpatriciaat*, pp. 234 sqq.; *Amsterdam in de Zeventiende Eeuw*, edited by Brugmans, Vol. III, pp. 44 sqq.; *Instructions, Hollande*, II, pp. 424 sqq.

vincial States were unable to cope with recalcitrant towns, and the provinces paid no heed to the States General.

There was a gradual increase in the number of those who looked upon the restoration of the stadtholdership as the only way of overcoming the evils of the day. The secretary of the council of state, Slingelandt, one of the ablest men of the period, advocated the strengthening of the central power in a number of memoranda which enjoyed a wide circulation though they were not published during his lifetime. In the end, although he was a leading member of the oligarchic party, he came to the conclusion that the vicious circle could not be broken unless a stadtholder were appointed. In many circles economic considerations contributed to the desire for an orangist restoration. The conviction that trade was declining caused many commercial interests to wish for the return of a prince of Orange, although the rulers of Amsterdam were unable to forget that, with the sole exception of Frederic Henry, no stadtholder had ever understood the importance of trade.

The restoration came in 1747.<sup>1</sup> When, in 1740, the War of the Austrian Succession broke out, the Dutch Republic tried hard to preserve its neutrality. But the extreme orangists advocated the participation of the Republic in the war, because they knew that war presented the best chance for a restoration. They were supported by the British government, which considered that the promotion of the Frisian stadtholder to the full Orange succession would increase British influence. It was only in 1747 that the French, seeing how the Dutch Republic was gradually becoming involved in Great Britain's continental schemes, attacked its territory. The cry that arose invariably when the country was in danger was heard once more: people demanded that the prince should be placed at the head of the state. This demand was strengthened by the conviction that Great Britain would approve of the prince's elevation because he was the son-in-law of the king of England. As in 1672, the orangist movement began at Veere in Zeeland. This was on April 24th 1747, and five days later Rotterdam and The Hague followed suit. On May 3rd the prince was made stadtholder of Holland. The next day the States General appointed him captain-general of the Union. The provinces where he was not yet stadtholder followed at once.

There had been the usual campaign of the ultra-orangists, the most prominent of whom was count William Bentinck. As in 1672, there was also a democratic movement which made a determined

<sup>1</sup> P. Geyl, *Willem IV en Engeland tot 1748*, and *Revolutiedagen te Amsterdam*.

attempt to introduce reforms in the country's constitution. Once more the prince failed to support the democrats and the popular elements to whom he owed his appointment. But there was a striking difference between this and the previous restoration. Prince William IV stood by the ruling caste much more consciously and much more openly than any of his predecessors. This time there were remarkably few changes in the personnel of the urban administrations. On the other hand, the democratic movement was much stronger than in 1672. Times had changed, and the relation between classes was very different from what it was in the seventeenth century.

The year after the restoration, 1748, witnessed new popular commotions. In many parts of the country the lower middle class demanded that the dignity of stadtholder should be made hereditary, and that the people should have some influence upon appointments to the urban councils. They wanted other democratic reforms as well. Prince William IV accepted the increase of his own powers for which the democrats were agitating, but, apart from the granting of a few financial reforms, he gave his full support to the continuation of the dictatorship of the upper middle class. The orangist democrats were very disappointed. Many of them realised at last that the prince was not on their side. Henceforth there was a twofold opposition to the house of Orange. Many of the regents of the old States party remained in office, but, although they reaped the benefit of the prince's class bias, they were by no means converted to orangism. For the first time there now also appeared a democratic opposition. It is conceivable that if William IV had boldly come down on the side of his democratic supporters he might have become in fact what the orangist rank and file had always expected their prince to be, the leader of a popular party. It is not certain, however, that this would have been a desirable solution. The prince would still have been the man of a party instead of the national symbol standing above parties. He would, moreover, have been beholden for his position to a revolution, which might have taken place at a moment when the revolutionary party was not ripe for the responsibilities of office. The synthesis of national forces would not have been strengthened by a development of this nature. The position of the prince was difficult. He was isolated and unable to cope with the complicated realities of a changing social order.

During the revolt of the Netherlands and throughout the seventeenth century the dictatorship of the upper middle class, exercised

through the agency of the regents who were the trustees of their class, was in keeping with the whole social and economic order. It placed the Dutch Republic in the van of social evolution, and was indeed the most realistic and efficient dispensation that could have been evolved in existing circumstances. By the time William IV became stadtholder this was no longer the case. The regents had become a closed caste which stood apart even from the wealthy upper middle class. To begin with, the nobility had almost entirely amalgamated with the bourgeois patricians. As a result of intermarriage practically all difference between the two had disappeared. Only in some corners of Utrecht, Gelderland and Overysel, and in the Generality Lands of Brabant, where they lived isolated in their country seats, did the noblemen preserve their separate identity. The bourgeoisie no longer looked upon the hereditary administrators as its own representatives. The middling classes, a fortiori, felt that they had nothing in common with these men who despised them and who had begun to affect a mode of dressing which distinguished them from all other citizens.

It was at this time that a novel class distinction made its appearance. On the one side there were the masters, who indeed consisted of a small minority. On the other side were those who had no power or authority. They were united neither by common interests nor by common aspirations. But a growing hatred of the masters animated them. At the bottom of the social ladder poverty was spreading. There was much misery about 1740, but some twenty years later the situation had grown even worse. The prevailing pauperism frightened many good citizens, who began to realise that the old charitable institutions were unable to cope with the growing evil. The fact that the orangist restoration had made no difference to oligarchic corruption caused many supporters of the house of Orange to give up their old allegiance. And meanwhile new ideas were finding their way into the minds of men.

After a long period of intellectual stagnation the Dutch Republic received an influx of foreign doctrines which stimulated thought among the members of the middling classes. Locke became popular, and taught Dutchmen to reject arbitrary intellectual authority and to believe in the supremacy of reason. The writings of Hume gave a democratic twist to this growing rationalism, and later the works of Price and of Priestly added a revolutionary hue to incipient egalitarianism. French influences first of all affected social life and fashion. Actors, tutors, hairdressers and dancing masters from France exercised a considerable social influence upon

their employers, and in the end it was unfashionable for a young man to read Dutch literature. Then the French philosophers, and most of all Montesquieu, began to be read. By 1770 a new generation imbued with the ideas of the age of enlightenment had arisen. These younger people revived old Netherlandish notions of local liberty and national sovereignty, and developed a disconcerting tendency to take the professions of republican faith made by the regents of the States party at their face value. The ideals of the American revolution, but especially the success of this revolution, increased the intellectual ferment. Among the members of the upper middle class who did not belong to the regent caste, among the intellectuals of the middling classes, and among the secluded landed nobility, the new ideas gained ground rapidly. Their adherents began to call themselves "patriots". They formed patriotic societies, and numerous pamphlets and periodicals appeared in support of their doctrines. The working classes were generally discontented as a result of their economic condition, but they remained unaffected by the new doctrines. The orangist regent Van Hogendorp said that in the 1780's not more than one quarter of the Dutch nation took an active part in political controversy.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE PRINCE AMONG THE REGENTS

**A**GE-LONG habits delayed the moment when the Dutch people found out the unreality of the old party division.<sup>1</sup> There was, during the magistracy of William V, a period of uncertainty when many antinomies became visible without crystallising into a new two-party system. The regents opposed the prince of Orange. The middle classes opposed the regents, but were also hostile to the prince, partly because the new doctrines caused them to look upon him as a tyrant, and partly because the economic malaise made them dissatisfied with authority in general. The proletariat, untouched by novel doctrines, continued to be loyal to the house of Orange. Most anomalous of all these oppositions was that between the prince and the regents: the interest of both was conservation and demanded that they should co-operate. As

<sup>1</sup> For this chapter, see Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd*, 3 vols.

yet they were unable to see this. Moreover, foreign policy helped to obscure the class realities.

The American revolution, which broke out in 1773, brought about a temporary collaboration between the regents and the middle-class democrats. The American proclamation of independence of 1776 was received with enthusiasm by the Dutch supporters of the new doctrines. Moreover France, which was still smarting under the loss of so many of its colonies in the Seven Years' War, sided with the Americans against Great Britain in 1778, and about the middle of 1779 France and Britain were formally at war. The prince, whose mother was English, sympathised with the British cause, and this increased the traditional anti-English feelings of the States party. Amsterdam in particular had reasons for wishing to support the French side. Its merchants refused to allow the state of war to interrupt their normal trade relations with France. They wished to continue the despatch of materials required by the French fleet. They calculated that even if three out of every four ships sent by them to France fell into British hands, the profits made on the fourth cargo would still make their trade worth while. Amsterdam therefore advocated what was called an unlimited convoy system: the trade in war materials was to be protected by the armed forces of the Republic. A bare majority in the States of Holland supported the policy of Amsterdam. The other provinces, where orangist influences were stronger, refused to adopt the policy of Holland. French and British diplomacy struggled and intrigued, the province of Holland practically threatened to break up the Union, and the world witnessed the *reductio ad absurdum* of the federal régime. The fact that there was a stadtholder made no difference to this deplorable state of affairs, and the Republic drifted into the fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780-84). The war was disastrous for the Dutch, whose colonies were captured by the British. After protracted peace negotiations which were particularly humiliating for the Republic the colonies were restored thanks to French patronage.

The passions aroused by the war exacerbated existing antagonisms. Political weeklies, soon to be followed by political dailies, made their appearance. The numbers of those who took an interest in current disputes increased every day. The regents of the States party endeavoured, and not without success, to persuade the middling classes that the only difference between the existing régime and a stadtholderless system was of a personal nature: different men were enjoying the fruits of office. They contributed to the publications

of the radical patriots and hoped, with their support, gradually to curtail the powers which the stadtholders had acquired since the restoration of 1672. One of the best known pamphlets of the time, an appeal addressed *To the People of the Netherlands*, gave a review of the development of national institutions in the fanciful manner current among early seventeenth-century historians, with their lyrical descriptions of the democratic institutions of the ancient Batavians. It attacked in turn all the princes of the house of Orange, and ended with an appeal to the people to elect a council that would advise the prince about measures required for the salvation of the country. "Arm yourselves, all of you!" was the pamphleteer's final exhortation.

Though such appeals were fraught with danger to the authority of the oligarchs, large numbers of them actively supported the popular movements that broke out in response to these inflammatory writings. In Gelderland and in Overysel, in many parts of Holland, Friesland, Utrecht and Zeeland, the urban patricians concluded formal alliances with the democrats. They agitated for the abolition of the prince's right to interfere with the appointment of magistrates. In many provinces the landed nobility joined this uneasy alliance. Patriot associations increased in number, and in 1785 they published their programme. It claimed freedom as the born right of all Dutch citizens, and declared that all citizens were entitled to be governed under laws to which they had given their approval. The magistrates were to be mandatories, not independent agents, and must therefore be elected by the people. Then came a revealing statement. The people, said the patriot programme, consisted of the citizens who were comfortably off, not of the rabble of the streets. If the poor were allowed to vote, they would be tempted to sell their vote to the highest bidder. Those, however, whose reliability was guaranteed by their economic independence ought to possess the right to express themselves freely in speech and in writing. It is remarkable that the programme made no mention of the antiquated federal constitution and of the need to amend it.

United, at least for the time being, by their opposition to the house of Orange, the patriots were not confronted by a homogeneous orangist party. The prince's adherents were totally unorganised. His supporters were to be found in considerable numbers among the peasantry and the urban proletariat, and in the army. But the court circles whose advice guided the prince had no desire to make use of these undistinguished supporters, and shared, moreover, the

universal horror of the rabble. The most reliable among the prince's adherents were a few old families where orangism was a tradition, and those unconscious supporters of the idea of national synthesis who existed throughout the life of the Republic. A *History of the Dutch Republic* published in London in 1778 numbered among the partisans of the house of Orange "the most rational or polished part of the moderate party or whimsicals". These people, according to the English historian, were animated "by a persuasion that the measures and maxims of the republicans were equally inconsistent with civil liberty and the prosperity of the state. Besides, they were disgusted with the cant, the arrogance and the affectation of that party and they considered the offices of stadtholder, admiral and captain-general, to be necessary to support the dignity of the state; to preserve the uniformity of the government; to restrain the abuses of subordinate officers; to superintend the internal administration and to enforce military discipline". Van der Goes, a pamphleteer who belonged to a distinguished orangist family of Utrecht patricians, was the author of a vigorous diatribe against the selfish and domineering spirit of Amsterdam. He also edited a weekly paper, *The Old-fashioned Netherlands Patriot*, in which he defended the house of Orange. But he was cold-shouldered by his fellow-regents, who were able in the end to elbow him out of the Utrecht town council.

Occasionally the orangist mob got out of hand, and broke the windows of the foremost anti-orangists. The burger militias and the regular troops thereupon restored order, and the magistrates took their revenge by carrying through a further curtailment of the prince's powers. Sometimes they slighted him by ignoring one of his prerogatives, such as the right of pardon if he tried to exercise it in favour of his supporters. In September 1785 the States of Holland passed a resolution depriving the prince of the command of the garrison of The Hague. Fearing that he might rouse the proletariat against them, they prohibited the wearing of orange favours at The Hague and in many other towns, and armed patriots saw to it that the orangists observed the new regulation. The prince, who had talked more than once of leaving the Republic and of retiring to his ancestral territories in Germany, went to Friesland, and from there to Gelderland. The populace of The Hague were furious that their prince had been driven away, and many members of the middle class joined in the protest. The civic guards of the town demanded that the prince's command should be restored to him. This change of attitude reveals the confusion of mind that



reigned at the period. It shows also that the middling classes were no longer satisfied with the dictatorship of the regents. The Hague was like a beleaguered place, with sentries and patrols in every street. Police spies reported every word spoken in favour of the prince, every display of orangist feelings. In the early months of 1786 the orangists of The Hague decided to form an orangist free-corps, and their example was followed in other towns.

Meanwhile resentment against the patricians was growing. For some time the democratic patriots had begun to realise the unnatural character of their alliance with the leaders of the States party. They saw that there was no community of interests between themselves and these conservatives. At Utrecht the democrats were giving a practical demonstration of their changed conception. They rose against their magistrates and compelled them to exclude the more "aristocratic" among them. Once more demands for the participation of the middle classes in the government and for popular elections of the magistrates arose. The oligarchs of the province of Holland saw the writing on the wall. They had not lost the ancestral wisdom that bade them count their gains while there was a chance of doing so. They came to the conclusion that it was better to have a stadtholder with limited powers who approved of their class-dictatorship than to see the triumph of a party that was, no doubt, hostile to the prince, but by no means favourably disposed to their own absolutism. This is why many of them lent a favourable ear to the voice of moderation of the Amsterdam burgo-master Rendorp, who persuaded the council of his town to pass a resolution recommending the reappointment of the prince to the command of The Hague garrison, and urging that he should be invited to return to Holland. This resolution was nearly carried through the States of Holland. Clearly, a turning point had been reached. A large conservative party supported by the orangist majority of the nation—merchants, small rentiers, proletarians,—was being born. They looked with disfavour upon the growth of patriot radicalism, and many oligarchs saw that their spiritual home was among these people. At this juncture the prince could have come back and put an end to what was virtually the third stadtholderless period, if he had had the courage to place himself at the head of his supporters and those who were ripe for an understanding with them. But he was not a leader. There was an orangist restoration, but it was brought about by William's Prussian wife, the great princess Wilhelmina, and by foreign intervention.

Order was restored in the end as a result of the working of forces

outside the Republic. The international position of the Dutch state at the end of the war with England was indeed unenviable. It was at the mercy of France. The Austrian emperor, who wanted to liberate his Belgic territories from the dead hand of the merchant republic, and to restore the prosperity of Antwerp by opening the river Scheldt was adopting a threatening attitude. The patriots were still unwilling to seek a rapprochement with Britain, because they were convinced that this country would immediately try to increase its influence by strengthening the position of the prince. At the time of William's greatest humiliation the British ambassador Sir James Harris was most careful to keep aloof from the party struggle in order not to compromise the prince. France, on the other hand, gave open support to the patriots because they were the enemies of Britain. When the tide began to turn in the spring of 1786, and the orangist movement was gathering momentum, Harris decided that the time had arrived for organising a counter-revolution. The oligarchs of Holland appeared still too independent, and perhaps also too unreliable, and he was not prepared to appeal to the mob. He therefore turned to the other provinces, which, throughout the history of the Republic, had never liked the predominance of Holland, and in particular to Zeeland, which remained orangist even though the course of events had once more placed the States party in control of its provincial States. In 1785 Zeeland was the only province that voted against an alliance with France: it was still anglophil as well as orangist.

Harris established contacts with Van de Spiegel, the pensionary of Zeeland. Van de Spiegel began his public career as a supporter of popular sovereignty. He advocated reform, even if it implied the curtailment of the stadtholder's powers. But he had an impartial mind and liked to look detachedly upon the quarrels of the day. He began to feel out of place among the anti-orangists, and came to the conclusion that the country's foremost need was peace through a compromise between the parties. During the Anglo-Dutch war, at the height of the attacks against the prince, he advised him to invite an impartial official investigation of his conduct, as his predecessor William I had done in similar circumstances. The prince refused. Van de Spiegel also advised the prince to place commissioners at the head of the various administrative departments and to join them into a body comparable with the British cabinet. This proposal was also rejected by the prince, who was unwilling to give up an atom of his powers and prerogatives, however curtailed they had become in practice. Meanwhile the Zee-

land pensionary also did his best to induce the patriot leaders to accept a compromise. The basis of this compromise, said Van de Spiegel, should of course not be "that the prince may keep all he has and shall continue to follow the advice of his present so-called cabinet". More and more, he became convinced that "unless we are to witness the downfall of the Republic, persons who are independent of both parties, who are moderate in their actions and endowed with sufficient courage to speak out for the good of the country, should put their hands to the task."

The historian Fruin said that, like the Amsterdam burgomaster Rendorp, Van de Spiegel belonged to those men "who were animated by no hatred against the stadtholder's dynasty, and entertained no plans for his humiliation. But they saw that he was unable himself to carry the burden of government, and that the backstairs council whose services he used had forfeited the trust of the nation. Instead of superannuated and impracticable methods of government they wanted to bring about a new and efficient system. They would have been satisfied, and more than satisfied", added Fruin, who wrote in 1876, "with a monarchy such as that under which we are living. But a revolution was needed to secure by force what the prince's lack of understanding and narrow-mindedness refused to the friends of gradual reform".

At the end of his vain endeavours Van de Spiegel came to the conclusion that the chances of forming a centre party had not yet arrived. While the patriots were too exalted to put water in their wine, he had some hope still to find the orangists amenable to reason. He set to work in his own province, and gained adherents to his views. It is to him, as we saw, that Sir James Harris turned his attention. In June 1786 the stadtholder and his family went to Middelburg because princess Wilhelmina considered that the time for action had come. But there were two difficulties. While France continued to support the patriots, the British government was not prepared to go to war with France in support of the policy advocated by its ambassador. The prince, on the other hand, continued to refuse to go outside the strictest legality, to take a single step that went beyond his rights, or to abandon a single one of his prerogatives.

The provinces were in a ferment. Open conflict broke out in Gelderland where the armed patriot bands ran away at the sight of the regular troops sent against them by the orangist States of the province. In Utrecht the States split into two sections, each of which proclaimed itself the legal provincial assembly. In Holland,

where the patriot movement was still gaining adherents, the oligarchs of the States party were expelled from the councils of Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and several other towns. Everywhere the regents were approaching the orangist leaders and renouncing their alliance with the democrats of whom they were heartily tired. Harris tried to rouse the orangists to action, but they pointed out that they could not move unless the French threat to give armed support to the patriots were neutralised by a promise that Britain would come to their own assistance. After protracted negotiations he was able to extract from his government a promise that, short of declaring war on France, Britain would not remain inactive.

The States General, which still had an orangist majority, now passed a resolution forbidding troops recruited by individual provinces to take any action against the army of the Generality, and guaranteeing the pay of soldiers who would come over from the private army which the province of Holland had recruited. At once whole regiments left Holland and joined the army of the Generality which was in Utrecht. But still the prince refused to lead an invasion into Holland. The princess decided to go to Holland by herself. She hoped to rally the supporters of the house of Orange, and to persuade them to exercise pressure upon the prince. Companies of the patriot army of Holland stopped her at the border of the province, and though they treated her with the utmost courtesy, they would not let her proceed on her journey. The king of Prussia allowed it to be known that he was greatly incensed by the affront inflicted upon his sister. Only the fear of becoming involved in a war with France kept him from entering the territory of the Republic at once to exact satisfaction. This time the British government took a decisive step, and the prime minister declared that any concentration of French troops near the Low Countries would be considered a *casus belli*. On September 13th the Prussian army crossed the border. Five days later, while an angry mob was shouting underneath their windows, the States of Holland passed a resolution restoring the stadtholder to all his offices. Britain, Prussia and the Dutch Republic concluded a Triple Alliance which guaranteed the restored constitution of the Republic, and Harris was created Earl of Malmesbury. Thousands of patriots fled to France where they formed the nucleus of an army which later took part in the invasion of the Republic. Van de Spiegel was made grand pensionary of Holland. Though he saw that the victory would be useless unless the constitution was reformed, he was powerless to effect a change. Moreover, the regents of Holland

knew that the restoration was the only means of saving their privileges, and gave their support to orangist conservatism. The community of interests between the princes of Orange and the urban oligarchs, which had existed throughout the history of the Republic, received a belated public acknowledgment.

The States party had disappeared. Two new parties were facing each other. The regents, the orangist lower middle class and the orangist proletariat stood on the same side, while the middling classes and the intellectuals formed a revolutionary opposition. Once more the name of Orange had been captured by a party. But the old Republic, rotten to the core, a mere survival with a constitution that no longer corresponded to the new distribution of economic and social power, was hastening towards its dissolution.

## BOOK IV

### SYNTHESIS

#### CHAPTER I

### THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

IN 1795 the armies of revolutionary France entered Dutch territory. The stadtholder William V fled to England, and the Dutch Republic ceased to exist. For nearly twenty years its territory was occupied by French armies. From 1810 to 1813 Holland, as we now call the Northern Netherlands without fear of confusion with one of the seven provinces, was part of the French empire. At first most of the Dutch acquiesced in the occupation, a number of them welcomed it enthusiastically. As time went on, however, the Dutch learned to loathe the foreign invader. They realised, perhaps for the first time, the meaning and the value to themselves of the fact that they were Dutch. It is this discovery that we must examine in this fourth book. With it, as we shall see, came the conscious acceptance of the national synthesis, which restored at one and the same time the independence of the Dutch and the position of the house of Orange, but this time as a national symbol standing above the parties.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from providing the shock that brought to the Dutch the realisation of their true identity and all that this implied, the French invasion also brought to Holland another and very great gift,—the glorious and beneficent doctrine of the French Revolution with its ideal of freedom, of equality and of brotherhood, which has enriched the minds of men and left them changed for the better. Like the renaissance and the reformation, the French Revolution belongs to the common patrimony of western mankind. This may appear trite to the blasé and the fastidious. But I am writing at a time when the *Grande Nation*, which is the second fatherland of all good Europeans, suffers from a setback. France will recover, and recover soon, precisely because she went through her immortal Revolution. Moreover, in Holland itself there existed before the war an important party which wrote its opposition to the French Revolution on its

<sup>1</sup> Bibliographies and Sources for Book IV in my *Robespierre* (1935) and *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands* (1930). Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland* (22 vols.).

banner. Being convinced that the ideas of this Revolution belong in a very special manner to the patrimony of my nation, I make no apology for the re-statement of what ought to be self-evident.

In the France of 1789 human beings arose who proclaimed that they had reached the adult stage, and claimed the rights of adults. The freedom demanded by the French people consisted in the recognition of the dignity of the human individual and of the sovereign rights of human individuals joined together in a nation. The nation, not an abstraction but a collectivity, stood up against a monarch whose rights were based exclusively upon tradition, convention, and heredity. Where privilege had reigned, the French proclaimed equality. They inscribed brotherhood on their banner, and wanted it to reign where the cruel oppression of men by men had prevailed. In the heat of the fight for freedom brotherhood would have had little chance, had it not found a refuge in the armies where even aristocrats were brothers if they fought for the sacred cause.

At the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution absolutism was no longer the general rule in Europe. The Dutch Republic was ruled by the upper middle class. Britain had its own peculiar system under which imperial affairs were managed by a combination of the aristocracy and the upper middle class, while local government was in the hands of the lesser nobility. In most other western countries enlightened despotism tried to pay some attention to new economic and social trends. In France absolutism, which had long since outlived its purpose, reigned unadulterated and uncompromising. Public life in France presented yet another paradox. The political power of the nobility lacked a solid economic basis. A considerable proportion of the provincial nobility was impoverished, the court nobility lived on pensions and doles. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, had acquired wealth by trade and industry. It was conscious of its power, and was sullenly resentful of the fact that it had no share whatever in the conduct of public affairs.

Thus, towards the end of the old régime, France was a country without political stability. The existing order of things was considered absurd and out-of-date by the majority of thinking people including a large proportion of the privileged class. The occasional cause of revolution, the spark that exploded the powder keg, was a coup by those for whose benefit the machine of government was run. Georges Lefèvre has described this "revolt of the nobles" in his recent book *Quatre-vingt-neuf* (1939). Administrative mismanagement and an adventurous foreign policy having exhausted

the treasury beyond the possibility of replenishment by other than heroic means, the nobility persuaded the king to call the nation for the semblance of a consultation. They felt that the unprecedented sacrifices required to stave off bankruptcy should be requested rather than demanded. They hoped, moreover, for the eighteenth century was a century of hope, that something would occur, something rare and comforting, that would secure for themselves an impossible and unmerited perpetuation of the good life, if for once the long-suffering nation were coaxed instead of being bullied. They advised the king to call his faithful estates, though that ghost of a parliament, the states general, had not met since 1614. There would be rousing ceremonial, professions of loyalty, a few courteously uttered complaints, some equally few and immaterial concessions. Then the third estate would voluntarily tax itself beyond and above the grinding toll already taken by the royal tax collectors.

The French nation threw itself enthusiastically into the work of electing its representatives to the states general. Its deputies went to the royal residence of Versailles, not to save the established order of things, but to demand a new régime that did away, once and for all, with privilege and inefficiency, and reflected the ideas and aspirations of the age. The men of the middle class, and those of the clergy and nobility who saw eye to eye with them, did not go with the intention of initiating a revolution. They went in the firm belief that their king would ask them to co-operate in the building of a new France. These men of substance, these professional men with a stake in the existing economic order of things, wanted no proletarian revolution. They wanted no more than what was achieved at the end of the long revolutionary period, when in 1814 and 1815 the middling and upper middle classes, through their representatives in a parliament elected on a very restricted franchise, were given a say in the shaping of their country's destinies.

Meanwhile, however, greater expectations had been aroused. The urban proletariat, which suffered from an economic crisis, hoped for relief, the peasantry, made restive by a succession of bad harvests, felt more acutely the hardship as well as the incongruousness of antiquated feudal obligations. The effervescence of the election period had not abated. Many men whom the doctrines of enlightenment had previously left untouched now waxed eloquent about rights and equality. Would they have revolted if the convening of the states general had not filled them with a new hope? It is doubtful, but who shall say? What is certain is that the king and his court had no intention of sharing their power with the



nation's representatives, and opposed the demands of the delegates with threats, and, when these proved unavailing, with trickery and passive resistance. On a number of occasions the deputies of the third estate, who meanwhile had turned themselves into a national assembly, either appealed to the masses or welcomed their intervention. Thus, influenced by a series of *journées*, during which the Paris populace took the law into its own hands, and by spontaneous acts of violence throughout the countryside, the national assembly abolished political privilege and the old régime.

The clash between the obstructionism of privilege and the determination of reformers who were ready to appeal to the street or use its support had two results: foreign war and a radical deviation to the left. As the popular element began to play an increasing part in defeating the plots of the aristocrats, its demands increased, and also its influence upon the course of affairs. At the same time a large number of reformers found it difficult to see why equality should mean equality for those only who had an income or earned more than a given figure, why freedom should not be the privilege of all men, even of those who might make use of this freedom in a manner that was distasteful to the propertied and the respectable. It is the eternal bane of liberalism that it must blend idealism with practical considerations, and that the reasonableness to which it must sooner or later appeal cannot be rational. The reformers of 1789 did not ask for much. "When in 1789 France made her impassioned demand for a constitution", says Vandal in his masterly study *L'Avènement de Bonaparte*, "she meant not so much a charter of political liberties as a body of rules that should be established once and for all and made definitive." But the men who were sent to Versailles to achieve this work of rationalisation discovered that it could make no progress till the ruler and those around him were compelled to adopt a very simple principle of political wisdom, once formulated by Aristotle: "All things considered, all persons ought to follow what is right, and not what is established". Once the deputies had made this discovery they found it impossible to look back. They began a revolution, and most of France followed them, supported them, and even pushed them faster than they wished to go.

There is one aspect of this story which we must never overlook, for it is highly relevant to the study of the impact of revolutionary France upon Holland. The French Revolution stood for the fulfilment of men's craving for decency, for justice and for beauty. The French did what others would have liked to do. And we must

remember yet another thing. When the hostility of the old world heightened the pitch of the Revolution, when it led to civil and foreign war, when dangerous idealists became free to dream aloud, when the French behaved as a nation possessed—even then the Revolution was never totally ugly. Men died for their beliefs and thereby hallowed them. They gave the world the greatest battle-song it has ever heard. Later, when a strong man used the French to become Europe's tyrant, he owed his success, not so much to his great talents, as to the idealism and the epic grandeur of his armies, where all that was best in the Revolution still survived. The men who, in Holland and in the other occupied territories, served France and Napoleon, were no quislings. They were the fighters for a better world, men as noble as the Frenchmen who first passed the frontiers of France and planted the flag of freedom beyond her borders. If, in the end, they were defeated, it is not because they were evil, but because they did not understand human nature. They did not know that there is in men something that transcends justice and the craving for an international order. They did not know that before they can think of a European order or the coming of the Second Kingdom, men want to be themselves, and true to their own self.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REVOLUTION AND THE DUTCH

THE king and his court had seen no vision. They hated the new France. Their submission was full of mental reservations. They plotted with foreign countries, and tried to obtain their assistance against the French nation while it was helping itself to its rightful heritage. The foreign powers were in no hurry to give this support. They still clung to the eighteenth-century conception of the European balance with its mixture of bullying and cunning, and they rejoiced at the weakening of their French competitor. The kings were torn between a doubtful loyalty to their royal trade union and the greed which was the guiding principle of each of its members. After much hesitation they gave to Louis XVI the support of empty threats. Meanwhile, in 1792, a gang of self-seeking southerners came to power in France. They wanted war with Austria and Prussia, because they wanted to

make the Revolution in which they were playing a part more thorough-going and more spectacular. They knew that nothing lends so much vigour to a popular movement as the common hatred of a foreign foe. While the Girondins drove France into a war for which it was not ready, the court betrayed the military plans of its own country to the Austrian and Prussian enemies. Yet the French fought, and the fierce conviction that right was on their side gave them the strength to throw out the invaders whom they had provoked.

Dark days and dark years followed. Egalitarian idealism and frenzied patriotism held sway, and terror ruled the land. The Committee of Public Safety wielded dictatorial powers, the Committee of Public Security sent people to the guillotine. Robespierre, the master of the committees, was a gentle nature made callous by overwork and fatigue more than by fanaticism. Once an opponent of the death penalty, he now approved of the execution of scores of people because he knew that all around him was reactionary plotting and treasonable profiteering. This man, whom we should nowadays call a radical, believed in social justice but also in private property, and feared the red levellers as much as the aristocratic friends of the foreign enemy. Precariously balanced upon his absolute compromise, he struck impartially at the right and at the left, until he was overthrown by men who wanted an even bloodier revolution.

As the head of Robespierre dropped into the basket, all that was plain and normal, sane and realistic in the old, vital and fundamentally sound country of France, rose in protest and refused to follow the extremists. Ordinary men had had their fill of blood and violence. They wanted to enjoy the fruits of their revolution in peace. The men of Thermidor who overthrew Robespierre were themselves carried off by the mass of peaceful and decent bourgeois who had had enough of exaltation and frenzy. They compelled the men at the helm to set their course towards the right, and yet more to the right. In the theatres young men broke the busts of bloodthirsty Marat, and in the streets it was now as dangerous to affect a revolutionary informality of dress as it had only recently been to appear in the garb of an aristocrat.

It was a significant moment. It revealed the play of one of those basic laws of history, which are simply the laws of human behaviour, because history deals with the behaviour of men living together in communities. Men are venturesome, or they would still be where their primitive ancestors once stood. But they are conservative too,

and cast a nostalgic glance at every harbour they leave, however uncomfortable it appeared while they were there.

The guillotine was packed up, but so was much of the idealism of the early days of the Revolution. A new constitution was conjured into existence, the Directoire made its appearance, and France became an authoritarian state ruled by small bodies that steered a hesitant course between high finance and dogmatic revolution. Delivered from the nightmare of fear, men threw themselves into a frenzy of sensuality, like the peoples of Europe after the first World War. The norms that had centuries behind them had gone, but integrity went into exile together with revolutionary intolerance, of which it was but another aspect. The period of the Directoire was corrupt to the marrow. One thing saved it from utter decay: the war went on. It was waged by armies inspired by the idealism of 1792 and 1793. Yet, though the warriors remained the same, the war itself had changed. As inflation and corruption grew, the Directoire became increasingly aware of the fact that treasure could be extracted from the countries occupied by its armies. The liberation of oppressed peoples became a mere pretext for predatory expeditions. The armies of occupation were the vanguard of hordes of rapacious collectors who emptied Belgium, Holland and Italy of their wealth.

It is at this stage of its development that the French Revolution made its impact upon the Dutch state. The Southern Netherlands, which belonged to Austria since the war of the Spanish Succession, were invaded by the French in November 1792, lost by them the following year, and re-occupied in 1794. On the second occasion the country was treated as conquered territory. The French pillaged Belgium of its food, its horses, its leather and its cloth, and made it a dumping ground for their worthless paper money. Finally, in October 1795, the Directoire issued a decree which united the territory of the Southern Netherlands, i.e. Belgium and the principality of Liège, to France.

It was the French attack upon Belgium that brought England into the war. The ruling classes of England disliked the Jacobin Revolution, but did not go to war against it. The whole English people was horrified at the execution of king Louis XVI, but this did not bring them into the war. Great Britain was in one of its periodical moods of isolation. Only when the Austrian Netherlands, so indispensable to the security of England, were annexed, did the English realise the need for intervention. The French revolutionaries acted first, and on February 1st 1793 the convention

declared war against the king of England and the Dutch stadtholder. During 1793 Anglo-Dutch armies fought the French in Belgium and in French Flanders under the atrocious generalship of the duke of York. In the autumn of 1794 the territory of the Republic was invaded by the French general Pichegru, who advanced very slowly towards the north. The stadtholder William V decided to leave the country. On January 18th 1795, he stepped on board a fishing boat at Scheveningen and crossed to England as a refugee. Within a few weeks of his departure the whole territory of the Republic was in the hands of the French.

When the stadtholder left for England the party of the patriots would have liked to start a revolution and to establish a convention and committees on the French pattern. But in France, where the terror was just over, there was a new spirit of moderation, and the French deputies who accompanied the army decided that the transition to the new dispensation must be gradual, and that the preservation of order was their first concern. The particularism which had characterised the Dutch in the past showed itself in the separate agreement which the people of Zeeland made with the invader. Protected by its wide rivers, their province was more difficult to occupy than the rest of the country. As a result the Zeelanders were able to avoid unconditional surrender. French paper money which gained currency in the rest of the Dutch territory was not introduced in Zeeland. Garrisons were kept down in number. No requisitions were to be allowed and many of the old regents continued their functions in the urban administrations of Zeeland. Elsewhere, however, the change was great.

For the time being the institutions of the country were upheld, but new men were appointed to operate them. They belonged to the well-to-do middle class, to the people who had provided the bulk of the patriot party. This peaceful revolution carried out by rhetoric rather than by violence was accomplished in six weeks' time. Orange flags were abolished. The red-white-blue flag was universally adopted. While local government was allowed to remain what it had been, considerable changes were made at the centre. The French tried to introduce centralisation as they had done in their own country. The States General ceased to be an assembly of delegates and became a body of actual representatives of the country. They held out against the French demands for large territorial cessions, and the French, who were primarily in need of cash, preferred the substance to the shadow. In May 1795 an offensive and defensive alliance was concluded between the two sovereign

Republics. The Dutch made a few relatively slight territorial concessions and allowed the French to occupy some fortresses. Thereupon the Dutch began to organise their newly-gained liberty. They found the fashionable revolutionary work of constitution-making unexpectedly difficult. Two contrasting currents divided the patriots as soon as they began their work of reorganisation. They were the unitarists and the federalists. The unitarists, convinced and enthusiastic revolutionaries, wanted their country to be like France and form a united and undivided Republic. The federalists represented the tradition of the Dutch Republic and still more the conflict of material interests which had characterised it throughout its history. The provinces were afraid that they would have to share the vast debt of Holland, while this province did not want to give up its predominant position in the state. Amsterdam was particularly determined in this respect. The clergy—once the pillars of orangist centralisation—supported the federalists, a sufficient indication of the profound change that had taken place in the country.

A national assembly was elected by universal male suffrage. It worked out a constitution which, though outwardly an imitation of the centralising system of the French Directoire, was in fact based upon federalist principles. A plebiscite was held in August 1797 and rejected the new constitution. As it happened the Jacobin extremists had recently gained ground in Paris. Their victory was reflected in Holland where, with the support of the French army, the extreme unitarists staged a coup d'Etat. In January 1798 they arrested the leading federalists and promulgated a new constitution which copied the system of the Directoire more genuinely than the previous constitutions. Like its French model the new government was incompetent and corrupt. In May 1798, however, a new change took place in Paris and moderate elements once more gained the ascendancy. The atmosphere at The Hague was at once affected, and in July 1798 a new constitution was passed which was more moderate in its unitarism.

Under its latest constitution Holland received the name of "Batavian Republic". What characterised this dull satellite of France was, in the first place, the break with the old régime implied in the introduction of a moderate dose of centralisation. Meanwhile, however, the enthusiasm of the admirers of the French Revolution had been damped by successive disappointments. Political antagonisms began to wear off. There was a dim beginning of national reconciliation. Nevertheless, the habit of copying

the French in their innumerable constitutional adventures persisted. Like all revolutions which do away with the profoundly human principle of monarchy, the French Revolution was slowly reverting to one-man rule. In 1799 the consulate was established in Paris, and the inevitable delayed reaction at The Hague was a new constitution in 1801.

Slowly the increasing number of people who disliked the new order began to look upon the house of Orange as a symbol of opposition and of national liberation. This rapprochement between orangism and the national idea revealed itself for the first time in 1799, when an Anglo-Russian army landed on the Dutch coast. The Dutch army took part in the resistance against this invasion, but the Batavian government ventured to throw out some careful feelers in the direction of an orangist restoration. When the peace of Amiens was being negotiated in 1802 the Batavian government tried to obtain compensation for the house of Orange whose properties in Holland had been confiscated. In short, anti-orangism was going the way of revolutionary fervour. But the Dutch people were still bewildered and lacked a common ideal. Upon a superficial observer they might still make the impression of being ripe for assimilation. Their energies and their strong identity were merely dormant: what was needed to awaken them was a common experience of misfortune, oppression, and resistance. The empire of Napoleon provided this experience.

The French Revolution was following a course which was so fatally pre-determined that many contemporaries were able to map it out in advance. When a considerable amount of energy is applied by a man or by a group of men to achieve a purpose, a surplus of energy is bound to remain available after this purpose has been achieved. It will continue to operate in the direction in which it has been applied, independently of the fact that it is no longer required. Nature is not a careful and precise dispenser: it produces means that exceed its requirements. In the same way, when they set themselves a goal, human beings develop a mentality that will enable them to reach it. In the course of their work they build an organisation and acquire habits and loyalties. They are incapable of discarding all these as soon as their task is performed. One might give this habit of things and of human beings the name of "law of inertia". In physical science the law of inertia describes how a body that is in motion continues this motion as long as it is not arrested or deflected by an outside influence. The human law of inertia appears to work in the same way. One has witnessed in

England the formation of a coalition between the various parties for the purpose of winning a war. When the war was won the coalition found it difficult to dissolve itself. Between the beginning of his personal reign and 1685, or thereabouts, Louis XIV was performing a highly necessary task, giving his country the unity and the cohesion of which it was so badly in need, and safeguarding it against interference from outside. What happened when his objects were achieved as well as they could be in his day? He continued his work of absolutist centralisation, and military security gave way as a principle to military conquest. The result was that a deterioration set in in the government of France which is sometimes mistakenly attributed to a decline of Louis' health or to a change in his advisers. The French Revolution went through a similar process. Threatened by a conspiracy between the court and foreign powers, it went to war for the defence of its own existence, but when its safety was assured it continued to fight and to conquer. The law of inertia was operating. Napoleon was needed because France was rapidly disintegrating as a result of the corruption of the Directoire. He put the country's affairs in order and stayed on; he gave France a protecting zone of buffer states, and went on to conquer Europe.

When Napoleon became emperor in 1804 he was already past his zenith. The culminating moment of his career came in 1802, when he concluded the peace of Amiens which was a confession by the English that they could not stay the course. When he made himself emperor, Napoleon was at war once more with Great Britain. He wanted to defeat his enemy by means of a blockade. He considered that one-man rule would turn the Batavian Republic into his willing instrument, and he decided to appoint a dictator. He chose the lawyer Schimmelpenninck, one of the moderate unitarists who were then in the ascendant in the Dutch Republic. After protracted negotiations in which he obtained very advantageous terms for the Batavian Republic, Schimmelpenninck agreed to become "grand pensionary" and was given sole executive power. The Dutch were amused at this return to the terminology of the old Republic, which after all the events of the previous decade sounded like an antiquarian revival. They treated the grand pensionary with the sarcasm that is their usual weapon when they are powerless. Yet this able man rendered considerable services to his country. His magistracy lasted only one year, but during this time he consolidated the improvements brought about by the French Revolution, and prepared the Dutch nation for monarchical government. He



reformed finance, rationalised local administration and regulated education. Henceforth the country was a genuinely centralised state in which the province of Holland played no greater part than the other provinces.

## CHAPTER III

## A KING FOR THE DUTCH

SCHIMMELPENNINCK disappeared as suddenly as he had arrived, and Napoleon's brother Louis became king of Holland in 1806. This change was part of the family system of Napoleon who liked to consolidate his position by surrounding France with vassal kingdoms and principalities where his relatives and his trusted friends reigned. King Louis' reign need not be examined here from the point of view of Napoleonic policy. What gives it importance in an historic survey of the evolution of Dutch national sentiment is the fact that this foreign adventurer discovered the inwardness of Dutch nationhood, admired it and loved it. He was, and not unwillingly, one of the men who were instrumental in the national regeneration of the Dutch.

Napoleon wanted to tighten his grip on Holland, and to intensify the part played by this country in the blockade of England. He hoped that his brother would serve him more faithfully than the Dutchman Schimmelpenninck. Louis had every reason to be devoted to Napoleon. He had learned to look up to his elder brother who must have seemed a demi-god to him when, in his smart sub-lieutenant's uniform, he arrived to spend his leave among his Corsican family in 1786. Napoleon took his young brother with him to Auxonne, and paid for his board, his clothes and his education. He did without an orderly to save money from his exiguous pay. Napoleon coached his brother in mathematics, history and geography, and wrote about him with parental pride to Joseph, the eldest brother of the family: "All the women are in love with Louis. His tone is neat, smart and French". This remark throws a revealing light on the preoccupations of the younger generation in a family whose mother tongue was Corsican and whose ambition it was to become assimilated to the culture of their new mother country. "His social manner is agreeable", continued Napoleon, "he is a charming creature. He works from inclination as much as from pride, and he is full of 'sentiment'." Afterwards Louis was sent to the military school of Châlons. Napoleon still paid his fees

and kept an eye on him. When he was a general and went to Italy he took Louis with him as an aide-de-camp. Louis did his share of fighting and displayed courage, but when things became really dangerous Napoleon sent him to Paris with dispatches. It was the same during the Egyptian campaign. The rising general once more made Louis his aide-de-camp, but before the dangerous raid into Syria he sent him home with dispatches. Louis returned this devotion. He worked hard to advance Napoleon's interests and showed far less envy towards him than did the other brothers who managed to believe that the Bonapartes had a dynastic right to share the power and the glory that came to their brother. About 1800 Louis was a colonel with little interest in military affairs, a devout reader of Sterne and of the early romantics. He married Hortense de Beauharnais, daughter of Joséphine, the wife of Napoleon, so that a special family interest brought the two brothers still closer together. By 1806 Louis had become one of the most important personages in the imperial scheme. He was a prince of the blood, colonel-general of the carabineers, commander of the garrison of Paris, a member of the privy council and the council of state, a senator, a count of the empire, grand chancellor of the legion of honour, great constable of France and a wearer of the most distinguished orders in Europe.

At the age of twenty-eight Louis went to Holland with the earnest intention of being a successful king. "You may be sure", he said to the Dutch delegates who came to greet him, "that from the moment I set foot on the soil of the kingdom I became Dutch." He worked so hard that after a while he was forced to go for a holiday at Mayence. He endeavoured to recover the debt which France owed to Holland and to obtain an alleviation of Holland's military and naval obligations. Sometimes he revealed flashes of common sense that remind one of Sancho Pança on his island kingdom. One day the inhabitants of a polder near Amsterdam asked for permission to raise their dyke. Amsterdam objected because, as its council rightly pointed out, the waters instead of overflowing into this polder, would rush into Amsterdam. Louis looked at the plans, meditated awhile, and then decided that the inhabitants of the polder could raise their dyke by as much as they liked, while Amsterdam would have to raise its own dyke by just the same amount.

In the early days Louis was like a child with a new toy: he played the game of royalty with excessive keenness. The ceremonial he introduced at his court surpassed the rigid etiquette of the court of

Napoleon. He created field marshals and bestowed orders and titles of nobility that were like a caricature of the emperor's new-fangled creations. "Don't make yourself ridiculous", wrote Napoleon; what he meant was: "don't make me ridiculous"! The emperor also wrote: "You care too much for popularity among the Dutch. You are trying to receive the applause of your shopkeepers". But already there was more than vanity in Louis' attitude to his new country. In 1808, before it was known that the Spanish adventure would turn into a hopeless fiasco, Napoleon offered him the crown of Spain. Louis declined the honour. He was too much attached to Holland. "My only wish, the only thing I am able to do, is to remain Dutch", he wrote at a later stage, when Napoleon suggested that he should abdicate. For Napoleon's attitude towards his royal lieutenant soon ceased to be solely inspired by irritation. Louis refused to be a mere instrument of his brother's policy. He sabotaged the continental blockade, tolerated wholesale smuggling, and organised passive resistance against the emperor's agents. Finally when the situation became impossible Louis refused to obey Napoleon, and about the middle of 1810 he left the country. Before he went he said to a friend: "The empire of the world would mean nothing to me in comparison with Holland. . . . I was born a Frenchman, I am proud of it, and I should have liked nothing better than to remain French all my life. But when I became king, I became Dutch, and nothing in the world could change me now".

The Bonapartes were wanderers without a country. Napoleon remained a foreigner in France, and the kings he created remained foreigners in their kingdoms. Quiet, contemplative and introspective, Louis was different: he became absorbed by his new environment. Suddenly transplanted in the midst of a nation with a real identity, this man without a country surrendered with delight to these people, who, under alien occupation, went on quietly and unobtrusively being themselves. He made efforts to learn Dutch. The Dutch landscape haunted him all his life, and he remained faithful to the Dutch and to Holland till his death in 1846. He continued to follow the affairs of his adopted country with unflagging interest, and received all Dutch visitors who came his way. The Dutch liked him. The patriot Van Hogendorp wrote most kindly about him in his private diary in 1808, the poet Bilderdijk praised him in his verse.

Louis's reign was beneficent. He had the flair required to discover good advisers, and the wisdom to listen to them. He intro-

duced useful reforms, and meditated others which he had no time to carry out. He dreamt of a constitution which would give his subjects personal and religious freedom and fair taxation, and wanted to submit this constitution to the free vote of the people. He showed—as we have seen by one example—a genuine understanding of the typically Dutch problem of defence against the waters. He familiarised the Dutch with the idea of a popular monarchy that stood above the parties, and helped them to forget the divisions of the past. But the greatest significance of this odd figure is that he was the first to make the public rediscovery of Dutch nationhood.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### “THE DUTCH ARE DIFFERENT”

**A**FTER the forced abdication of king Louis, Holland was annexed by France in July 1810. Even then, the country was not made an integral part of the French empire. There was first of all a transitional period when the royal administration remained unchanged. It lasted till January 1811. Then came a French governor-general, Lebrun, duke of Plaisance, who was 75 and appeared destined to become the pliable instrument for which Napoleon had been looking in vain. But even the duke turned out to have ideas of his own. Moreover, the emperor had found it necessary to promise not to treat Holland as an annexed country. As a result Holland continued to be something outside the scheme of French imperial uniformity. A large number of officials arrived from France; most of the prefects and sub-prefects of the Dutch *départements*, and all the customs and censorship officers were French. But on the whole the officials in charge of the direct administration of the country were Dutch. Dutch remained one of the two administrative languages. There was no intensive Frenchification such as took place in Belgium.

The French officials who came to Holland were not content merely to carry out the blockade efficiently. They were determined to work upon the population, to gain its good will and to make it ready for assimilation in order that Holland might become an integral part of the empire. The administrative and police officials took their work seriously. Apart from an immense volume of reports on the behaviour of individuals, of classes and of regions, they also sent home serious studies which remind one of the reports

drawn up nowadays by British and Dutch colonial officials. There exists a fascinating memoir finished in October 1813 by D'Alphonse, the intendant for home affairs in annexed Holland. Certain passages of this report show that the author made a genuine endeavour to understand the psychology of the Dutch.

One of the things which surprised D'Alphonse most was the universal habit of drinking vast quantities of tea. He said that the custom of tea-drinking had been introduced by the East India Company which used to pay physicians for declaring that beer was pernicious to the health. "The women contributed to this triumph of tea over beer. They prepared the beverage themselves for their husbands, their children and their friends. The time of tea-brewing", he wrote, "was a moment which brought people together for a welcome moment of relaxation: they liked to repeat it as often as possible. This still takes place, even among the upper classes. The ladies themselves make the tea, and they proceed to it with their usual methodical tidiness. Tea is drunk during the morning, again in the afternoon, and not infrequently once more after supper. Nor do they limit themselves to one cup, but they take several in rapid succession. The number increases according to the taste of the drinker. Sometimes as many as eight or ten cups are emptied, but the average is more modest and not above three or four cups." To this excessive use of tea D'Alphonse attributed a number of nervous disorders and digestive troubles from which the Dutch were suffering. He also considered that the bad condition of their teeth was the result of their taking so many hot drinks as well as of their over-indulgence in tobacco.

Describing the character of the Dutch D'Alphonse said that it was "calm, cold, serious, grave and even phlegmatic". Among the virtues forming part of the national character he counted "simplicity, gentleness, moderation, discretion, tolerance, patience, and perseverance". The resulting defects were "a slowness which nothing can remedy, which causes people to deliberate when they ought to act, an indulgence and a patience which degenerate into weakness, a servility towards their own methods, institutions, and customs, which makes them reject the most necessary innovations and the most useful inventions".

The upper classes, according to D'Alphonse, had less originality than those of other countries. About the populace hardly anything favourable could be said. "The annals of history attest its ferocity; every day brings proofs of its laziness and its tendency to drunkenness. Its brutality often equals that of the English mob, although

it often lacks the latter's pride. Nevertheless acts of ferocity are rare and are rather an exception to the general character." Religion enjoyed universal respect, said the writer, and the devoutness of the Dutch was sincere. Although the spirit of the Revolution had modified the attitude of isolated individuals towards religion, a general increase of religious sentiment could be observed.

The Dutch, said D'Alphonse, were no longer faithful to the simplicity of their fathers, but they had preserved "the sincerity, the honesty and the good faith" of the past. "The Dutch language seems to prove the ancient simplicity and the ancient sincerity of the nation. It owns few strong expressions and lends itself little to compliment and to flattery. It seems to be the language of a people which is used to say what it thinks." D'Alphonse considered that the dominant passion of the Dutch was love of money. He explained this by the fact that in the past they had been compelled to accumulate wealth for the defence of their independence. What, however, appeared to be the most distinctive trait of the Dutch was their love of freedom. "This feeling for freedom is not yet extinct. To it, in all probability, is due the particular kind of pride, and also the spirit of independence which one cannot fail to notice when one moves among them. These sentiments are in no way alarming: they are kept in check by a strong sense of justice."

Most of the reports sent to Paris by French officials were merely concerned with the loyalty and the spirit of the Dutch population, and usually the opinion of the reporters was unfavourable. They make it clear that the annexation was received by the Dutch with an affectation of indifference. Under king Louis, life had become so difficult that people felt relieved when the emperor became personally responsible for what was happening in the country. Almost everyone felt that independence had long since become a sham, and that it was better to call things by their real name. The councillor of state Réal, who was a high official of the French ministry of police, visited Holland in 1811 to observe the police system in the newly annexed territories. It is clear that he was not favourably impressed. He referred in his report to the enchanting pictures drawn by past travellers in Holland, and said: "I could have spoken about these unending marshes which have been turned into meadows, but where walking remains difficult, while it is impossible to sit down in them for a rest. I could have spoken of the innumerable gardens which surround the towns, but which have been planted in the mire, are water-logged and marked off by muddy and ill-smelling ditches. I could have mentioned their

towns which are numerous, populous, rich and clean, but where the canals that are so useful to commerce are filled with stagnant and pestilential waters. The houses are pretty, but, when one wearies of their invariable sameness, the eye looks in vain for a monumental building. Indeed, I have reflected that these observations might appear out of place in the account of a mission which was intended to find out the spirit of the inhabitants of these houses. Public spirit in Holland is anti-French."

Réal described how "generally speaking the French are received nowhere in Holland, and not a single salon is open to them in Amsterdam. The prince"—this was Lebrun, the governor-general—"who works excessively, does not hold an open salon after eight o'clock even on the days of gala dinners. As for the Dutch, they invariably shut themselves up in what they call their 'colleges', which are a kind of club where no Frenchman can penetrate, where members only are admitted, and where alarming news is hawked about. There they remain inaccessible to every new idea and every attempt to bring about a fusion".

In his analysis of the causes of this anti-French feeling Réal declared that it had nothing to do with the present annexation or with the events which had preceded it. On the contrary, he said, there has been an anti-French spirit in Holland for the last 150 years, as a result of the ceaseless hostile influence of English jealousy. In one way, as we shall see, Réal was right. The English were indeed and to a large degree responsible for the rebellious spirit of the Dutch, but he was mistaken when he said that recent events had nothing to do with it. The prefect of the *département* of the Mouths of the Scheldt, in other words of Zeeland, was better informed than Réal. In May 1811 he reported: "In Zeeland the public spirit follows the movement of commerce. The Zeelander loved his independence because he believed that he owed his commercial prosperity to it. . . . They would love the Emperor if His Majesty could give them the slightest grounds for hoping that part of their commercial relations would be resumed". This prefect understood the situation, and what he said applied also to the rest of the country. What angered the Dutch masses and the Dutch middle classes who had taken so kindly to the rule of good king Louis was that since the French had become the acknowledged masters of the country the continental blockade was being applied in earnest.

In July of the same year the Zeeland prefect said: "The mood of the public—*l'esprit public*—has made no favourable progress".

In November he said: "The *esprit public* continues to be bad". In February 1812 he reported a little improvement but added that it was very slow indeed and amounted to a little more submissiveness rather than increased loyalty or genuine attachment to the government. All subsequent reports of this prefect speak of "docility and resignation", but never fail to add that this was not due to any sincere attachment to the French. A French sub-prefect who lived at Zierikzee said that the Zeelanders did not believe that their connection with the empire would be permanent. They were merely trying to gain time and to keep the French at arm's length.

Marivault, police commissioner of Rotterdam, reported in May 1811: "The rather heavy physique of the Dutch inclines one to believe that they are good people, but their *bonhomie* is only relative and does not go beyond the circle of ideas and opinions they have formed for themselves. Like all their actions it is subject to calculation, and the moment they think that their interests are in danger they neglect nothing to achieve their purpose. In this respect they are marvellously adroit; their patience helps them and it is rare that they do not obtain what they set out to get".

Universal evasion of the blockade was reported by all agents. "The tendency to maintain unlawful communications is indeed universal" wrote one of them. The French police knew that the whole coastal population indulged in smuggling, and that anyone who wished to do so could leave for England by boat. Near the coast there were frequent arrests of people who had just returned from England. What these agents from England brought was of course not only forbidden produce. "The Dutch are always well informed" wrote a high official in 1813. "They know things before the agents of the government know them. They even know things which the government wishes to keep secret." Information was indeed one of the principal exports from England to the occupied territory. Fast sailing yachts would appear among the fishing vessels while they were out at sea and little bales of literature and pamphlets were thrown on board them. The contents of these were hidden by the fishermen in their wide knickerbockers and distributed ashore. Sometimes the French discovered these pamphlets, and often they were compelled to prevent the sailing of the fishing fleets from fear of contact with the British.

The most unpopular of the measures taken by the occupying authorities was conscription for the French army and still more for service in the French navy. In March 1812 there were riots at The Hague and at Scheveningen on the occasion of the registration of



fishermen for the navy. The rioters shouted "*Oranje boven!*". This cry of "Up Orange!" had become more than an expression of orangist sentiments. The people often used it to show their delight or to greet someone in authority. When Napoleon visited Scheveningen after the annexation the fishermen shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*", and "*Oranje boven!*" without at all realising that the juxtaposition was incongruous. It was a different story when the same people rioted to the cry of "*Oranje boven!*" They were beginning to think of the house of Orange as a symbol of resistance against the oppressor.

There were more riots in 1813 when the ballot for conscription was being held. Not only the fishermen but the peasants in the former provinces of Holland and Zeeland caused trouble. After the February riots, thirteen persons were executed. Then the riots, prompted by indignation and misery, ceased. The movement of resistance was receiving more purposeful impulses which refused to waste the national strength before it could be effectively utilised. Patriotic members of the upper classes had set to work, and English propaganda was beginning to guide the efforts of the discontented elements.

First and foremost among those who never despaired of seeing the restoration of the country's independence was Gijsbrecht Karel van Hogendorp. He was born in 1771 and his family belonged to the States party. From his early years Van Hogendorp was a convinced supporter of the idea of national synthesis; he considered that the happiness of the Dutch nation was closely linked with the fortunes of the house of Orange. When he published his doctoral dissertation in 1786 he had the unusual courage to dedicate it to prince William V, who at the time was under a cloud. He played a part in the orangist restoration of 1787 and became pensionary of Rotterdam. Between 1795 and 1813 he took no part in public affairs. He read and studied, and wrote a number of political memoranda, most of which he did not publish at the time. He kept open house, and was constantly visited by members of the old patriciate. To them he imparted his ideals and his hopes. His friends did not form a secret society. What happened was that each in turn left the invigorating presence of Van Hogendorp and went to spread the gospel of patriotism and liberation in his own circle of friends. The most important and the most devoted of Van Hogendorp's supporters were Van der Duyn van Maasdam, a cultured and fearless man who belonged to the nobility of the province of Holland, and count Leopold van Limburg Stirum, a retired officer without personal ambitions. Through him Van Hogendorp was able to

influence a number of officers of the former Dutch army. Among other supporters of the idea of a restoration was Anton Reinhard Falck, a young diplomat who joined the circle of Van Hogendorp. All these patricians did what they could to moderate the popular movement, because they knew that the time for action had not yet arrived. As the fortunes of the emperor declined, they intensified their whispering campaign. The number of visitors to Van Hogendorp's house at The Hague grew and with Van Stirum and other soldiers the host was making plans for arming the nation, that it might strike at the right moment. The French were not unaware of these comings and goings, but the efficiency of their police system was rapidly deteriorating. No arrests were made.

Meanwhile British propaganda was actively preparing the population for a restoration of the house of Orange in the person of the grandson of the last stadtholder William V. As we know, William V was not an impressive figure. When he fled at the beginning of 1795 and settled down first at Kew and then at Hampton Court as the guest of the British government, his sole idea was to return to Holland and to the position he occupied before he left. The notion that even a slight adaptation to the new ideas might be advisable did not occur to him. Eventually he went to Germany where he died in 1806. His son, the hereditary prince, who in the line of stadtholderly succession would have been William VI, was a very different man. He was ambitious and energetic, desperately keen on playing an active part, and ready to fall in with any scheme that gave him a chance of employment. British government circles had entirely forgotten William V by the time of his death, but William VI managed not only to be remembered but to be intensely disliked by them. He travelled extensively in Europe, and meeting Napoleon shortly after he became first consul, he fell under the spell of this successful ruler. He tried to ingratiate himself with Napoleon and to obtain employment from him. The British ministers knew this and resented it.

In 1809 Great Britain was facing the French empire by itself. The country was strangely out of touch with the continent, but its statesmen were slowly picking up the threads of diplomacy and prudently preparing a new coalition against the enemy of peace. They remembered the importance of Holland in the strategic scheme of things, and decided to obtain a foothold in that country. An expedition was sent to Walcheren. It ended in disaster. Prince William VI was not even informed of the British plans concerning Holland. But in 1809 he sent his elder son, William VII in the

succession of the house of Orange, to England. The young prince studied at Oxford and went to the army of Wellington where he was made an aide-de-camp in 1811 and became very popular.

From 1809 onwards William VI engaged in an arduous campaign to recover the good will of English government circles, and to obtain their support for the eventual restoration of his family in Holland. He suffered many rebuffs, but persisted till he was given a hearing by the people who mattered. He advocated the raising of a Dutch legion which should take part in the liberation of Holland, whereupon he was to become sovereign prince, not only of the territory of the old Dutch Republic, but also of a portion at any rate of the Southern Netherlands which were to be added as a barrier to his dominions. Very slowly, very gradually, he overcame the indifference of the British government. But his success was not complete. Although his ideas gained ground, although there was a willingness to make use of him in the Low Countries for military purposes, his personal stock failed to rise. Sympathy and popularity were the monopoly of his son. Lord Bathurst, the secretary of state for war, was extremely fond of the young man and wanted him to become the sovereign of the restored Netherlands.

Propaganda in the Low Countries was conducted by the War Office, and reflected the predilections of Lord Bathurst. We have noted that British agents maintained continual contacts with the Dutch. As dissatisfaction with French rule increased, the idea of a restoration of the house of Orange was accepted with growing alacrity. But the Dutch, whose only source of information was British, invariably mentioned the name of William VII in connection with this restoration. They knew of the plans for a marriage between William VII and princess Charlotte, the daughter of the prince regent, before these plans were public property. In January 1813, all Amsterdam was whispering that William VII, who had displayed great military talents in Spain, was going to marry the daughter of the prince of Wales, would land in the spring, conquer the country, and become grand duke of Holland. Police spies reported similar rumours from all parts of the country. At Arnhem and elsewhere coins and medals with the inscription "William VII, Prince of Orange, King of Holland", were discovered. They were in great demand, and changed hands at four times their face value. In July 1813 the French discovered a print showing a portrait of William VII who was described as the restorer of Dutch freedom. Little rhymes were circulating from mouth to mouth saying that William VII was coming back to the country to sit in

judgment over the French and the anti-orangists. In October all the talk was of the return of William VII at the head of an army corps under the prince royal of Sweden, and of the fact that Britain was giving the former Dutch colonies as a dowry to his future wife, the princess Charlotte. Not a single one of the verses, the broadsheets and the medals, which have been preserved or which we know through contemporary statements, mentioned William VI. No one in Holland had any grudge against him, where until the renewed orangist campaign the father and the son were equally unknown. Russia, Prussia, and the other allies knew and supported William VI and not William VII. The whole movement for upsetting the natural succession in the house of Orange came from Great Britain and in particular from the war office.

The man who thwarted this almost successful attempt which was fraught with danger for the national synthesis was Gijsbrecht Karel van Hogendorp. By his strong personality he completely dominated the circle of friends who by now had become real conspirators. One day the possibility that William VII would be placed at the head of the liberated country was mentioned. Van Hogendorp said: "We must keep to the right of birth, because after so big and so complete an upheaval the only sheet anchor is to build something legal on sound bases, and to unite all minds upon one point". The metaphor was not happy but it was understood.

In November 1813 the French, defeated in Germany and threatened with the invasion of their own country, evacuated Holland. Van Hogendorp and his friends organised a provisional government. They wrote to London and invited William VI to return and place himself at the head of the state. The British supporters of William VII gave way before this clear expression of the choice of Holland's leaders. But it is interesting to note that when on December 2nd the people of Amsterdam were waiting outside their town hall for the official proclamation of the prince of Orange as sovereign of the country, they were still discussing whether the prince who had come back was William VI or William VII. The same uncertainty existed in Friesland.

The restoration of the house of Orange, and its elevation to a position of greater dignity and greater responsibility than it had ever known, had a very different character from what it would have had if William VII had been proclaimed. The new sovereign prince came to Holland in response to an invitation sent in the name of the whole people. This made him a popularly appointed ruler, and was a recognition of the great tradition of popular sovereignty dear to all

Netherlanders. Nevertheless, the popular choice was determined by the fact that he was first in the succession. Thus there was a happy fusion between legitimacy and popular choice, between tradition and the new constitutional monarchy which embodied the best that came from the French Revolution. The old dispensation and the new joined in this important act. This is why the Dutch restoration differed from the creation of new monarchs in other countries in the course of the nineteenth century. An ancient succession was preserved, a great tradition was saved,—and yet a nation which had discovered itself marched into a future from which no conceivable improvement was excluded.

## CONCLUSION

THE national consciousness of the Dutch was subjected to one further trial. They were joined in one state with a population that did not share their identity. The outcome of the experiment proved that history had made them different, once and for all.

To create a stronger barrier against France the territory of the Southern Netherlands was added to that of Holland. The two parts were to form one country, and in 1815 the powers recognised the sovereign prince as king William I of the Netherlands. The creation of this united kingdom was an achievement of British diplomacy and a triumph for the British statesman Lord Castlereagh. The Dutch showed no enthusiasm for this union with a population which had not lived through their great experiences in the Dutch Republic and which did not participate in their national consciousness. But such was their good will and their confidence in their new sovereign, such was their joy at being free and themselves once more, that they submitted without a murmur to this experiment.

At the end of the Napoleonic wars, the Belgians were not yet endowed with the same determined sense of nationhood as the Dutch. One element of national consciousness they undoubtedly possessed. They showed the most obstinate resistance against every attempt that was made in 1814 to divide up their territory among the neighbouring states. They felt that they belonged together and that the river Meuse, far from dividing them, bound them together economically. The other element of national consciousness,—the realisation by a population that it is completely distinct from other populations and must on no account share with them the same state machine,—was still imperfectly developed among the Belgians. The conservative elements among them were not averse to a return to the house of Austria. The liberals looked with affection towards France, the home of the revolution, and would have preferred to remain part of it. Union with the Dutch was accepted by the Belgian population as a compromise preferable to partition.

Would it have been possible, at this late hour in the history of the people of the Low Countries, to effect a genuine fusion between them? Could the incipient sense of Netherlandish nationhood

which existed about the middle of the sixteenth century have been revived and allowed to grow? Certainly there were some elements making for fusion. In the first place the language of the Dutch was also that of the Flemings, who formed one half of the Belgian population. But twenty years of French rule had strengthened the position of the French language in Belgium, and the attempts of king William I to impose the Dutch language in Belgium were resented even by the Flemings whose mother tongue it was. In the second place the catholic religion of the majority of the Belgians was also that of one third of the Dutch population. But William's treatment of the catholic religion was ill-advised. Like the emperor Joseph II who caused the revolution of Brabant in 1789, William angered the Belgian catholics by his attempts to interfere with ecclesiastical discipline and education. At the same time he infuriated the Belgian liberals by his authoritarian methods. He was unable to forget his youthful admiration for the emperor Napoleon. He saw himself as a powerful monarch who used his ministers merely as clerks. Although in economic affairs he favoured the Belgians above the Dutch and encouraged their industries by protectionist measures that harmed Dutch commerce, the Belgians proved that ideals mattered to them more than material advantage.

There was still a more effective cause for the decision taken by the Belgians in 1830 to go their own way. It is the fact that, while still uncertain of themselves, they were brought in close contact with the Dutch, whose national character was so definite and so marked. Differences of temperament and outlook might conceivably have been overcome, differences of interest were being overcome. But the Dutch, without any assertion or proclamation of their identity, were so very much themselves that amalgamation with them proved to be impossible and undesirable.

In 1830 the Dutch were still too loyal to their sovereign even to dream of revolting against him. But it is conceivable that had the Belgians continued to tolerate this union of incompatibles the time might have arrived when the Dutch, with as little fuss as was displayed by the Norwegians when they parted company with their Swedish cousins in 1905, would have decided unobtrusively to cut the painter.

There has been talk in recent years among Flemings who have since given their support to pan-Germanism, and among a handful of Dutch dreamers, of a "Greater Netherland" based upon the community of language between the Flemings and the Dutch. If

such a union ever came to be, its fate would be that of the union that lasted from 1814 to 1830.

The Belgians were historically less fortunate than the Dutch. They had not the chance, till long after the Dutch, to possess a state of their own—the prerequisite for healthy nationhood. They owe much to their brief companionship with the Dutch, which hastened the development of their national consciousness. For the consciousness of national identity, provided it remains free from the disease of nationalism, is as necessary for a population as it is necessary for a young person to liberate itself from parental domination. The Belgians, who have learned that they differ from others, know that their problems are best settled by themselves. Twice attacked by the Germans in the twentieth century they have shown by their resistance that they value their independence as much as their indivisibility.

Successive revisions have made the Dutch constitution more democratic, and have given more and more reality to the doctrine of national sovereignty. Liberated from party connections, the monarchy has performed its part with growing success. It is a very difficult part, because no written constitution can give the formula of the subtle blend of anthropological realities, historical tradition, and social contract, which forms its essence. One attempt was made to return to the conditions that prevailed under the old régime. This was when the opponents of socialism tried to make the crown a symbol of conservatism. There was a regrettable but inevitable reaction. The misunderstanding, however, belongs to the past. Republicanism is dead in the kingdom of the Netherlands. It has been killed by the wisdom and the courage of queen Wilhelmina, who, by setting the example of resistance to her oppressed people, crushed fascism and saved the consciousness and the identity of the Dutch nation.



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